AN APOLOGIE OF THE CHVRCHES IN *NEW-ENGLAND* FOR *CHVRCH-COVENANT.*

OR,

A Diſcourſe touching the Covenant between God and men, and eſpecially concerning *Church-Covenant*, that is to ſay, The Covenant which a Company doe enter into when they become a Church; and which a *particular perſon enters into when he becomes a member of a Church.*

Sent over in Anſwer to Maſter BERNARD, in the Yeare 1639.

And now publiſhed for the ſatisfaction of all who deſire reſolution in this point.

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A DISCOVRSE TOVCHING THE *Covenant* between *God* and *Men*, and eſpecially concerning *Church-Covenant*, that is to ſay, the *Covenant* which a Company do enter into when they become a Church, and *which a particular perſon enters into when he becomes a member of a Church.* 1639.

JER. 50. 5.

Come let us joyne our ſelves to the Lord, in a perpetuall Covenant that ſhall not be forgotten.

ALthough that which is foretold in theſe two Chapters, and namely in the fourth and fifth verſes of this Chapter, was in part fulfilled when the people of God returned from Captivitie in *Babylon* at the end of ſeventie yeares: yet we muſt not limit the place to that time onely, but may extend it further to the dayes of the Goſpel, and the ſpirituall return, not of the Jews onely, but of the Gentiles alſo, when men ſhall be converted from Pagan, Antichriſtian, Babyloniſh, or Jewiſh bondage and captivitie, or from ſlavery to ſinne, and ſelf-righteouſneſſe, and ſhall be joyned to God in the fellowſhip of his Church, in the dayes of the New Teſtament. For as ſome paſſages in this Scripture were never fully accompliſhed at the returne from the captivitie of the ſeventie yeares, and namely this, that the children of *Iſrael* and *Judah* ſhould returne both together: (for the ten tribes returned not

at all:) ſo many things that literally concerned the Jewes were types and figures, ſignifying the like things concerning the people of God in theſe latter dayes: In which reſpect ſincere converts are called Jewes, *Rom.* 2. 29. and Iſraelites, *Gal.* 6. 16. *Joh.* 1. 47. and our Sacraments are made Antitypes of theirs, 1 *Cor.* 10. 1, 2, 3. and Rome is called Babylon, *Rev.* 17. 5. and Papiſts are called Gentiles, *Rev.* 11. 2. and therefore the captivitie of Babylon might well be a Type of the ſpirituall captivitie of Gods people to Antichriſtian bondage, and their returne from Babylon to Sion, a type of the returne of Chriſtians from Romiſh ſlavery to the true Sion, the Chriſtian Church. And this may be added further, that this place ſeemes not onely to be meant of the private or perſonall converſion of this or that particular Chriſtian, but alſo further, of the open and joynt calling of a company, becauſe it is ſaid, they ſhall come, the children of *Iſrael* and the children of *Judah* together, and that their ſaying ſhall not be, *Let me joyne, &c.* but in the Plurall number, *Let us joyne our ſelves unto the Lord,* ſo noting the joyning of a company together in holy Covenant with God.

Concerning which Covenant with God, it will not be amiſſe for the better underſtanding of that which followes; firſt, briefly to ſhew how diverſly Covenant is taken in the Scripture, which ſometimes imports generally any firme appointment or promiſe of God, when man doth not promiſe unto God any thing backe againe: Thus the preſerving of *Noah* in the Arke, and of the world from being drowned any more by a flood; the interchangeable ſucceſſion of day and night; the giving of the Prieſthood unto *Phineas*; the ſetting forth of the Shew-bread every Sabbath before the Lord, and the giving of the heave-offering unto the Prieſts, are ſaid to be done by a Covenant, or an everlaſting Covenant of God, *Gen.* 6. 18 & 9. 9. 10. 11. *Jer.* 33. 20. *Num.* 25. 12, 13. *Levit.* 24. 8. *Num.* 18. 19. But ſometimes Covenant is taken more ſtrictly and properly, for an agreement which God doth make with men, when he promiſeth ſome bleſſing unto men, and binds them to performe ſome dutie backe againe to him. Taken thus it hath two parts: firſt, a promiſe or ſtipulation of ſome bleſſing on Gods part: ſecondly, Reſtipulation or promiſe, or binding of man unto dutie backe againe on his part: both theſe are in thoſe words of the Covenant, *I will be to thee a God, thou ſhalt be to me a people:* and ſo *Gen.* 17. 1. & *v.* 7, 8, 9, 10. The Covenant

venant taken thus is either the Covenant of workes, or the Covenant of grace: And againe the Covenant may be considered, first as it is personall, private and particular, between God and one particular soule, making Covenant with God, and God with him, either at his first conversion, or at other times; of which we reade 2 *Sam.* 23. 5. & *Psal.* 119. 106. & 66. 13, 14. & 27. 8. & *Psal.* 119. 7, 8 Secondly, it is generall and publick of a company joyntly together, of which this Text *Jer.* 50. 5. seemes most properly to speake: as also that *Deut.* 29. 9, 10, &c. and that *Exod.* 19. 5, 6, and many others: A Covenant taken thus generally when it respects spirituall blessings, and spirituall duties, in the Communion of Saints, is that which is called Church-covenant, which Church-Covenant differs not in substance of the things promised from that which is between the Lord and every particular soule, but onely in some other respects; as first, the one is of one Christian in particular, the other of a company joyntly together. Secondly, if right Order be observed, a man ought not to enter into Church-Covenant, till he be in Covenant with God before, in respect of his personall estate. Thirdly, The one is usually done in private, as in a mans Closet between the Lord and his soule, and the other in some publick assembly. Fourthly, The one in these dayes is of such duties as the Gospel requires of every Christian as a Christian, the other of such duties as the Gospel requires of every Church and the members thereof.

Now concerning Church-Covenant, two things are to be noted for the better understanding thereof: first, the description of it: secondly, the use of it, and the benefit and fruit thereof. For "the former it may be thus described, *viz.* *A solemne and publick* "*promise before the Lord, whereby a company of Christians, called by the* "*power and mercy of God to fellowship with Christ, and by his providence* "*to live together, and by his grace to cleave together in the unitie of faith,* "*and brotherly love, and desirous to partake together in all the holy Ordi-* "*nances of God, doe in confidence of his gracious acceptance in Christ,* "*binde themselves to the Lord, and one to another, to walke together by* "*the assistance of his Spirit, in all such wayes of holy worship in him and* "*of edification one towards another, as the Gospel of Christ requireth of* "*every Christian Church, and the members thereof.*

In this description, there are comprised six things: First, the generall name of the thing: [*a solemne and publick promise*] a pro-

miſe it is, and therefore it is called, a joyning in Covenant here: an entring into Covenant, *Deut.* 29. 10. Solemne and publick, and therefore it is by the children of *Iſrael* and the children of *Judah* together: and they ſay, *let us joyne*. Secondly, The object [*the Lord, and one another*] *joyne our ſelves to the Lord*, it is not a promiſe onely to man, but to the Lord himſelfe, and likewiſe to one another; for, *come let us joyne*, implyes mutuall conſent together. Thirdly, The Agents or the qualification of the perſons: [*Chriſtians*] not Turkes, Indians, &c. Saints, *Pſal.* 50. 5. 16, 17. [*called to fellowſhip with Chriſt*] ſo 1 *Cor.* 1. 9. elſe if they be not united to Chriſt by faith, they are not fit materialls for ſuch a building as a Church of God, which is the houſe of the living God, *Epheſ.* 1. 1. 1 *Cor.* 1. 2. *Phil.* 1. 1. *Rev.* 21. 27. [*By his providence to live together*] elſe they cannot partake in the Lords Ordinances together as Churches ought to doe, 1 *Cor.* 14. 23. *Act.* 14. 27. the whole Church comes together in one place [*cleaving together in faith and love*] ſo *Act.* 4. 32. If they differ, namely, in opinion, or in their affection, and ſhould joyne in this Covenant, breaches, factions, rents, and ſchiſmes, would be like to be the iſſue of ſuch joyning: things ſo unlike would not cloſe nor long hold together, *Dan.* 2. 43 [*Deſirous to partake in all Ordinances*] this ſhould be the ground of their joyning in Covenant together, *Pſal.* 110. 3. willing: and not pride, nor gaine, nor the like: Fourthly, The Act [*binde themſelves*] that now they are bound by their owne word and promiſe, that they may ſay now, as *Pſal.* 56. 12. *Thy vowes are upon me*, or as *Num.* 30. 2. if he binde his ſoule with a vow. Fiftly, The matter promiſed; [*To walke together in all ſuch wayes of worſhip and mutuall edification, as the Goſpel requireth of Churches and Church-members*] they binde not themſelves to obſerve any deviſes of their owne, nor inventions of men, but ſuch things as the word of God requireth; neither is it perfect obedience to the Law, for that were impoſſible to performe, and preſumption to promiſe; nor is it onely in generall the duties of the Goſpel, but ſpecially ſuch duties of worſhip to God, & edification of one another as concerne Church-State, which now they enter into. Sixtly, The manner of performing [*Confidence of Gods gracious acceptance and aſſiſtance through Chriſt*] for in all our wayes God muſt be acknowledged, *Pro.* 3. 6. and much more in ſuch ſpeciall matters of weight: If men in entring into this Covenant looke for acceptance, through any worth

of

of their owne, or promiſe dutie in their own ſtrength, they ſhew themſelves like to the Phariſees, *Luk.* 18. 10, 11. and turne the Church-Covenant into a Covenant of workes: and as many as are of the workes of the Law, are under the curſe, *Gal.* 3. 10.

The uſe and benefit of this Church-Covenant, and the fruit thereof, may be ſeene in two particulars; firſt, That this is that whereby a company of Chriſtians doe become a Church: It is the Conſtituting forme of a Church. Secondly, This is that by taking hold whereof a particular perſon becomes a member of a Church, which was conſtituted afore. For the former of theſe; every Chriſtian Church muſt have in it both matter and forme, and as the matter by Gods appointment are viſible Saints, or viſible beleevers, *Epheſ.* 1. 1. 1 *Cor.* 1. 2. and in the New Teſtament, onely ſo many as may meete together in one Congregation: So the forme is a uniting, or combining, or knitting of thoſe Saints together into one viſible body, by the band of this holy Covenant. Some union or band there muſt be amongſt them, whereby they come to ſtand in a new relation to God, and one towards another, other then they were in before: or els they are not yet a Church, though they be fit materialls for a Church; even as ſoule and body are not a man, unleſſe they be united; nor ſtones and timber an houſe, till they be compacted and conjoyned.

Now that a company becomes a Church, by joyning in Covenant, may be made good ſundry wayes; firſt, By plaine Texts of Scripture; as from *Deut.* 29. 1, 10, 11, 12, 13. *Ye ſtand this day all you before the Lord your God, your Captaines of your Tribes, your Elders, your Officers, with all the men of Iſrael*, ver. 10. *That thou ſhouldeſt enter into Covenant with the Lord thy God*, ver. 12. *and he may eſtabliſh thee for a people unto himſelfe*, ver. 13. So that here is plainly ſhewed, that here was a company, *ver.* 10. and this company were to be eſtabliſhed to be a people unto the Lord, that is to ſay, a Church, *ver.* 13. And this is done by the peoples entring into ſolemne Covenant with God, *ver.* 12. And therefore a company of people doe become a Church by entring into Covenant with God.

"*This Covenant was not like our Church-Covenants, for it was of all* *Object.* 1
"*the Nation together; whereas the Church-Covenant with us, is of ſome*
"*ſelect perſons, leaving out others.*

1. This Objection concerns the matter of a Church, but the Covenant is not the materiall cauſe of a Church, but the formall *Anſwer.*

cause thereof: and for this the Text is plaine and expresse, that by entring into Covenant with God, a people come to be the Lords people, that is to say, his Church.

2. If it was of all the people together, the reason was because that Church was a nationall Church: now if a nationall Church becomes a Church by entring into solemne Covenant with God, then a Congregationall Church becomes a Church by the same means; for there is no difference between them in this point.

3. Though it was of all the people, we may not say it proves that when we looke at the materiall cause of a Church, there may be a promiscuous taking in of all Commers without distinction or separation of the precious from the vile; for, first, when God took in this Nation to be his people, he separated them from all the Nations of the earth besides: so that there was a distinction and separation of some from others. Secondly, this generation was generally a generation of beleevers; for it was they that were to enter into the land within a while after; for they were fortie yeares in the Wildernesse, & this Covenant was made in the last moneth save one of the last of those fortie yeares, *Deut.* 1. 3. And their carkasses fell not in the Wildernesse through unbeliefe, as their Fathers did, *Num.* 14. *Heb.* 3. but entred by faith, and when they were entred, subdued Kingdomes by their faith, *Heb.* 11. 33. and served the Lord all the dayes of *Joshua*, and of the Elders that outlived *Joshua*, Josh. 24. 31. As for that which is said of them, *ver.* 4, 5. of this Chap. that the Lord had not given them eyes to see, &c. that proves not that they were wholly hardned in a carnall estate, but onely that they were dull and slow of heart to consider of sundry dispensations of God towards them; for as much is said of the disciples of Christ, *Mar.* 8. 17, 18. when doubtlesse they were not meere carnall or naturall persons.

Object. 2 "*This people* Deut. 29. *could not become the Lords people by entring* "*into solemne Covenant with God, for they were the Lords Church and people already before this.*

Answer. 1. If they were, yet that was by entring into solemne Covenant with God on Mount *Sinai*, when the Lord had brought them up out of the Land of *Ægypt*; for then they entred into solemne Covenant with God, and God with them, and so they became the Lords peculiar people, *Exod.* 19. 4, 5, 6, 8. *&c.* If they were his people before that, yet that also was by Covenant made with them in the

the loynes of *Abraham*, when God tooke him and his ſeede to be his Church and people, yet ſeparating *Iſhmael* from *Iſaac* and *Eſau* from *Jacob*, that the inheritance of the Covenant of God, and of being the Church of God, might reſt in the houſe of *Jacob*.

2. Yet it was not without great reaſon that the Lord ſhould now eſtabliſh them by ſolemne Covenant to be a people to himſelfe, becauſe the Nation had been much degenerated from the ſpirit and wayes of *Abraham* in *Ægypt*, and had broken that Covenant by their Idolatries there, *Ezek.* 20. 7, 8. And the Covenant made in *Sinai* or *Horeb* when they were come out of *Ægypt*, they had alſo broken by their Idolatries in the Wilderneſſe, *Ezek.* 20. 13, 16. for which cauſes, and the like, the Lord conſumed that generation, that they never entred into the Land, *Joſh.* 5. 4, 6. And therefore now when their poſteritie and children were ready to enter in, the Lord entred into Covenant with them, and thereby eſtabliſhed them to be his people, their Fathers being cut off for breaking the Covenant. But ſtill it was by Covenant that both Fathers firſt, and children afterward became a Church and people unto God; and when this generation were entred into the Land, their Covenant made before between God and them, was confirmed by Circumciſion, *Joſh.* 5. 3 7. they being not Circumciſed before.

Object. 3 "*But this Covenant was of the whole Church with God, and therefore "not like our Church-Covenants, which are between the Church and the "members concerning watchfulneſſe over one another, and the like.*

Anſwer. Our Church Covenants are with the Lord himſelfe, as was ſhewed before in the deſcription thereof. For watchfulneſſe and duties of edification one towards another, are but branches of the Lords Covenant, being duties commanded by the Law: and ſo it was with that people of *Iſrael*, who when they promiſed and Covenanted to walke in all the wayes of God; in all his ſtatutes and commandements and judgements, they promiſed theſe duties of love and watchfulneſſe and edification one towards another, becauſe theſe were duties commanded and required of God, *Lev.* 19. 17 *Deut.* 29 18 the neglect whereof in the matter of *Achan* was the ſinne of all the Congregation, and brought judgement upon them all, *Joſh* 7. 11, 12. Yea by this Covenant they were bound to duties towards them that were not then preſent, but children afterward to be borne, and proſelytes, that afterward ſhould be added

ded to them, *ver.* 14, 15. Like as our Church-Covenants are with them that now are, and that hereafter ſhall become members of the ſame Church. When *Jehojada* made a Covenant between the King and the people, 2 *King.* 11. 17. that Covenant was but a branch of the Lords Covenant with them all, both King and people: for the King promiſed but to Rule the people righteouſly, according to the will of God: and the people to be ſubject to the King ſo Ruling. Now theſe duties of the King to them, and of them to the King, were ſuch as God required in his Covenant, both of him and them: and ſo it is in Church-Covenant, the duties of the Church to the members, and the members to the Church, and one another, are no other but ſuch as the Goſpel and the Covenant of grace requireth both of the Church and the members of it in their ſeverall places.

Object. 4 "*But this place of* Deut. 29. *is not ſufficient to prove a Church-Covenant in theſe dayes: becauſe it is in the Scriptures of the old Teſtament, for whatſoever muſt be uſed in the dayes of the New Teſtament, muſt be proved from the Scriptures of the New Teſtament, or elſe it is to be layd aſide.*

Anſwer. 1. The Church-Covenant may be proved from the New Teſtament alſo, as will afterwards appeare.

2. But ſuppoſe there were not pregnant places for it in the New Teſtament, yet it is not enough to prove the ſame unlawfull: for whatſoever Ordinance of the old Teſtament is not repealed in the New Teſtament, as peculiar to the Jewiſh Pædagogie, but was of morall and perpetuall equitie, the ſame bindes us in theſe dayes, and is to be accounted the revealed will of God in all ages, though it be not particularly and expreſſely mentioned in the writings of the New Teſtament, elſe how ſhall we prove it unlawfull for a man to marry his Siſter, or his Aunt? How ſhall we prove it warrantable and neceſſary for Magiſtrates to puniſh Sabbath-breaking, blaſphemy, and Idolatry? How ſhall we prove it lawfull to apply the ſeale of Gods Covenant unto Infants? or to admit women to eate of the holy things; for the Scriptures of the New Teſtament doe ſpeake little in theſe caſes; onely the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament doe give direction, and light about them, *Lev.* 18. *&* 19. *Neh.* 13. 15. *&c.* 2 *Chron.* 15. 16. *&* 2 *King.* 23. *Gen.* 17. 2. *&* *Exod.* 12. 4. 6. And the New Teſtament hath nothing to the contrary, and they are all according to morall equitie and reaſon, and

and therefore they are to be obſerved from the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, as the revealed will of God, though there were nothing expreſſely for them in the New. And the ſame we ſay of the particular in hand. For, that a company ſhould be combined together into one body, in way of Government and ſubjection, by way of mutuall free Covenant; as men doe when they enter into Church Eſtate, nothing is more naturall or agreeable to morall equitie; nay, it implyeth a contradiction in the very name of libertie or freedome, that free-men ſhould take upon them authoritie or power over free men without their free conſent, and voluntary and mutuall Covenant or Engagement. And therefore ſeeing this Covenant is not repealed in the Scriptures of the New Teſtament, the Scriptures of the Old are ſufficient warrant for it.

Another Scripture to prove the ſame, is *Deut.* 26. 16, 17, 18. with *Deut.* 27. 9. *This day the Lord hath commanded thee to doe theſe Statutes and Judgements, thou ſhalt therefore keepe and doe them, &c. Thou haſt avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walke in his wayes, and to keepe his Statutes, &c. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people; Take heed and hearken, O Iſrael, this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God.* This Scripture plainly ſhewes theſe things: 1. That here was the making of a Covenant between God and man; for that avouching of God to them, and them to God, was the making of Covenant, *ver.* 17 18. 2. This was not of one perſon, but of a company together, the whole people of *Iſrael*, 26. 18. & 27. 9. 3 Here is the effect of this Covenant, that thereby they become the Lords people, *ver.* 9. So that when a company doe enter into holy Covenant with God, they become thereby the Lords people, that is to ſay, his Church. So *Ezech.* 16. 8. proves the ſame likewiſe: *I entred into Covenant with thee, ſaith the Lord, and thou becameſt mine.* Here alſo is the making of Covenant between the Lord and men; and this Covenant was not perſonall, but of a company; for it was with Hieruſalem, *ver.* 2. which was a whole Citie; it was with them that were multiplied as the bud of the feild, *ver.* 7. and it was with them that did proſper into a kingdome, *ver.* 13. and therefore not meant onely of any one particular perſon: And by this Covenant they became the Lords; that is, the Lords Church and people; for it is expreſly ſaid, *I entred into Covenant with thee, and thou becameſt mine.* So that when a company enter into Covenant with God, and God with

them, they become thereby the Lords Church and people. Likewiſe *Ezek.* 20. 37. *I will cauſe you to paſſe under the rod; and I will bring you into the bond of the Covenant.* In which place, there is firſt mention of an holy Covenant. Secondly, This was not of one perſon, but of a company, the whole houſe of Iſrael, *ver.* 30. 39. Thirdly, And this Covenant is called a *Bond*, becauſe it is by Covenant that a people are bound, and tyed, and knit together, as one Church, all of them unto the Lord, and one unto another; So that the Covenant is the bond of union, by which a company are ſo combined and united, as that they become a Church. It is alſo obſervable, how the Lord before he would bring them into this bond of the Covenant, he would *cauſe them to paſſe under the rod*; by which phraſe, as *Junius* upon the place well obſerves, is meant tryall and probation; drawne from the manner of Shepheards or owners of Cattell, who went among their ſheepe, or other cattell with a rod, and therewith pointed out ſuch as were for the Lords holy uſe, as *Lev.* 27. 32. And ſo hereby is noted that God would not in the dayes of the Goſpel have men to be brought into his Church hand over head, but he would firſt cauſe them to paſſe under the rod of due tryall and probation; and then ſuch as upon tryall were found to be holy for God, or meete matter for his Church, ſhould ſolemnly enter into Covenant with God, and that Covenant ſhould be the bond that ſhould combine them, and knit them together into one, that ſo they that were many particular perſons, ſhould all become one body, that is to ſay, a Church.

And ſo much of the firſt Argument drawne from plaine Texts of Scripture.

Argu. 2. A ſecond Argument may be taken from the Titles that are given to the Church; as firſt, that the Church is ſaid to be married or eſpouſed unto Chriſt, *Jer.* 2. 2. & 3. 14. 2 *Cor.* 11. 2. From whence the Argument may be formed thus: If every Church becomes a Church by being married or eſpouſed unto Chriſt, then a company becomes a Church by way of Covenant: But the former is true, therefore the latter is true alſo.

The Aſſumption, that a Church becomes a Church by being married unto Chriſt, is plaine from the former Scriptures, where the Church of *Iſrael*, and the Church of *Corinth*, in regard of their entring into Church-Eſtate, are ſaid to be eſpouſed and married unto Chriſt, as a loving and chaſt Virgine to one husband. Which

ſpirituall

ſpirituall marriage between Chriſt and his Church, is alſo taught in the type of the marriage between King *Salomon* and *Pharoahs* daughter, *Pſal.* 45.

The Conſequence of the Propoſition is plaine in reaſon; for there is no marriage but by way of Covenant; no woman becomes a mans wife, but by way of beſtowing her ſelfe in Covenant upon ſuch a man: neither doth a man become an husband, but by the ſame means; and therefore the Scripture ſpeaking of the violation of marriage, calls it a violation of Covenant, *Prov.* 2. 17.

"*Chriſt hath but one wife or Spouſe*, Cant. 6 9. *Object.* 1.

The Catholique Church indeed is but one; *viz.* the whole company of Gods Elect in heaven, in earth, dead, now living, and not yet borne: But as there is the Church-Catholique, which is but one; ſo there are particular and viſible Churches, which are in number many; and therefore the Scripture ſpeakes of Churches, 2 *Cor.* 8. 1. 19. *Gal.* 1. 2. Of the Churches of the Gentiles, *Rom.* 16. 4. Of ſeven Churches, *Rev.* 1. 4. Of all Churches, 1 *Cor.* 14 33. & 7. 17. *Rev.* 2. 23. *Anſw.*

"*But if every particular Church be the wife of Chriſt, how many hun-*
"*dred wives ſhould he have?* *Obj.* 2.

1. If the Church of Iſrael, *Jer.* 2. 2. the Church of *Corinth*, 2 *Cor.* 11. 2. The Jewiſh Church, *Rev.* 19. 7. be the Spouſe and wife of Chriſt, there is no reaſon but others ſhould be the ſame alſo, eſpecially ſeeing there is no particular Church, but in reſpect of their Church eſtate, they may decline and goe a whoring from Chriſt, and that ſhews that they were firſt eſpouſed to him; for no woman can be ſaid to goe a whoring from a man, if ſhee were never married, nor eſpouſed to him at all. *Anſw.*

2. This that ſeemes an abſurditie, and were a ſinfull practiſe among men, in reſpect of Chriſt, is a certaine truth, and no diſhonour unto him at all, to have more Spouſes then one upon earth, many ſpirituall Spouſes. Men cannot give themſelves wholly and entirely to many as Chriſt can. Every faithfull ſoule is eſpouſed and married unto Chriſt; and in that reſpect he hath not onely many hundred but many thouſand, yea many millions of ſpirituall Spouſes.

"*But this ſpirituall marriage is between Chriſt and the Church, But* *Obj.* 3.
"*the Church Covenant is between the Church and the members, and*
"*therefore this marriage doth not prove the Church-Covenant.*

Answer. 1. In some sort there may be said to be a marriage between the Church and the members, *viz.* in respect of that deare love and affection, that ought to be between them; and therefore it is said, *As a young man marrieth a Virgine, so shall the children of the Church be married to the Church*, Isa. 62. 5.

2. But properly the marriage is between Christ & the Church, and so is the Covenant also, so farre as therein they give up themselves to Christ as unto an head and Lord; as a woman in the Covenant of marriage doth give up her selfe unto her husband; And the performance of such duties as the Church and the member owe one unto another, is a branch of that marriage-Covenant, wherein they are tyed to Christ; for Christ himselfe in his Covenant requires, not onely that they should give up themselves to him, but also that they should performe these duties one unto another. And accordingly it is said of the Churches in *Macedonia*, that *they gave up themselves first to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God*, 2 Cor. 8. 5. True it is, they doe also binde themselves by Covenant one unto another, but in that respect the Covenant is properly a brotherly Covenant; like that 1 *Sam.* 20. 8. *Amos* 1. 9. because there the engagement is to one another as brethren, fellow-members, and fellow-helpers, and not as to one head or Lord, as it is in respect of Christ, and therefore in that respect it is not so properly a marriage-Covenant as it is in respect of Christ: though duties to one another are promised in their Covenant with one another, and also in their Covenant with Christ. In briefe thus: They promise unto Christ duties to him, and duties to one another according to him: and so their Covenant is a marriage-Covenant with Christ: They promise also to one another, duties to one another, and so it is a brotherly Covenant.

Another Title given to the Church (which also proves that a Church is made by Covenant) is the Title of a Citie, or Citie of God, *Psal.* 87 3. & 48 1. 8. & 122. 3. *Ephes.* 2. 19. The Argument lyeth thus. If a true Church be a Citie of God, then a Church becomes a Church by Covenant: But every true Church is a Citie of God. *Ergo.*

The Assumption is proved by the Scriptures forealledged. The Consequence of the Proposition is plaine in reason, for every Citie is united by some Covenant among themselves, the Citizens are received unto *jus Civitatis*, or right of Citie priviledges, by some

Covenant

Covenant or Oath; And therefore it is so likewise in this Citie of God the Church; and men become Citizens of the Church by solemne Covenant.

The third Argument may be drawne from the meanes of reforming and restoring a Church when it is corrupted, which is by entring into Covenant a new with God, 2 *Chron.* 15.10. & 29.10. & *Neh.* 9.38. & 10.28, 29. *Jer.* 50.4, 5. The reason may be taken thus: If a Church decayed is to be restored and reformed by renuing Covenant with God, then it was instituted and erected at the first by way of Covenant: The reason of which Consequence is, because abuses and corruptions are to be reformed by bringing things back to the first Institution: Thus Christ reformes the abuses of marriage, by bringing them to the first Institution of that Ordinance; *From the beginning it was not so*, Mat. 19.8. And thus *Paul* reformeth the Abuses of the Lords Supper, by telling them what was the first Institution thereof, 1 *Cor.* 11.23 &c. And thus the Lord Jesus calling on the declining Church of *Ephesus* for reformation, *bids her remember from whence shee is fallen, and repent and doe her first workes*, Rev. 2.5. *Argu.* 3.

Now the Assumption is plaine from the Texts above alledged, that at the reforming of a Church, there is to be a renuing of Covenant; and thence it follows, that at the first erecting of a Church, there was the making of a Covenant with God, for els this renuing of Covenant would not have been the way to reforme it.

The fourth Argument is taken from that which doth dissolve a Church, which is the dissolving or breaking of the Covenant, *Zach.* 11.9,10 14. If dissolving the Covenant be that which doth dissolve the Church, then the making of Covenant is that which constitutes a Church. The reason of the Consequence is plaine, because otherwise the Covenant might be dissolved & the Church stand still, if it were not the making of the Covenant that did constitute the Church: But if dissipating stones in a building doe dissolve the house, then the compacting and conjoyning of them is that which makes the house; If separation of soule and body be that which destroyes the man, that then we say he is not: it must needs be the uniting of them, that did constitute & make the man: and so it is in this case. And that dissolving the Covenant is that which dissolves a Church, is plaine from the Text alledged, *Zach.* 11. where the breaking of the two staves, of beautie and *Argu.* 4.

bands, that is, the unchurching of the Jewes, is interpreted to be the breaking of the Covenant that God had made with that people, and the brotherhood that was between *Judah* and *Israel*.

Argu.5. The fifth Argument is taken from the diſtinction which God hath appointed amongſt Churches, and the confounding of all Churches into one, if there be not this Covenant to diſtinguiſh them. If Churches be diſtinct Societies, and may not be confounded, then Churches are compacted and combined by Covenant: But the former is true. *Ergo*.

That Churches are diſtinct Societies, is plaine in the Scripture, where we have mention of many Churches in one Countrey or Province, *Gal.* 1. 1. 1 *Theſ.* 2. 14. Of ſeven Churches in Aſia, *Rev.* 1. 4. and of all the Churches, 1 *Cor.* 14. 33. *Rev.* 2. 23. *Epheſus* is not *Smyrna*, nor *Smyrna* is not *Thyatira*, nor either of them *Pergamus*, but each one diſtinct of themſelves, having Officers of their owne, which did not belong to others: vertues of their owne for which others are not praiſed, corruptions of their owne, for which others are not blamed; If it were not thus, then when *Laodicea* is condemned for lukewarmeneſſe, or *Epheſus* for declining, all the reſt ſhould be reproved alſo: And when *Philadelfia* is praiſed, all the reſt ſhould be praiſed alſo, which we ſee is otherwiſe. Now from hence the Conſequence is certaine, that therefore they are combined by ſome Covenant each one amongſt themſelves; for there is nothing els without this that wil ſufficiently diſtinguiſh them. The Spirit of God and Faith in their hearts, is common to all Chriſtians under heaven, and in heaven alſo, and therefore this is not the thing that makes diſtinction. Nor is it habitation in the ſame Towne together, for that may be common to ſuch Chriſtians as are not of this Church, and uſually is to many that are no Chriſtians. As it is with Companies in *London*; as the Company of Goldſmiths, &c. that many others dwell in the ſame Towne with them, yea it may be in the ſame ſtreete that are not of their Company: and therefore it is not meerely habitation that doth diſtinguiſh them from others, but ſome combination and agreement amongſt themſelves; So it is not habitation in the ſame Towne that diſtinguiſheth Churches, and Church-members from other men, but their mutuall agreement and combination and joyning themſelves together in an holy Covenant with God.

"If the Spirit of God and Faith in their hearts cannot distinguish one "Church from another, because these are common to them all, then how "can Covenant distinguish them, sith all Churches are joyned by Cove- "nant one as well as another? *Object.*

It is not a Covenant simply or a Covenant in generall that doth constitute a Church, or distinguish one Church from another, but a Covenant with application and appropriation to these persons. Even as it is in marriage, though all married couples be united by Covenant, and a Covenant wherein one couple promiseth the same duties that another couple doth, yet a Covenant with application and appropriation of the duties covenanted to this man and this woman in particular, such a Covenant is the very thing that make a couple, man and wife together, and gives them mutuall power over each other, as husband and wife, and puts a distinction between them and all other men and women in the world. And so it is in this case; a Covenant to performe Church-duties with application and appropriation to such persons, is the very thing that constitutes a Church, and distinguisheth one Church from another. *Answer.*

And thus much concerning the former of the two particulars, to shew the use of Church-Covenant, *viz.* that it is that whereby a company doe become a Church.

The second particular is this, that taking hold of the Covenant, or joyning in it, is that which makes a particular person a member of a Church. And this followes upon the former, and that may be the first Argument to prove it.

If joyning in Covenant be that which makes a company to become a Church, then taking hold of that Covenant is requisite to make a particular person become a member of the Church: But the first is true, as hath been shewed before; Therefore the second is true also: If compacting and conjoyning of stones and pieces of Timber, be that that makes an house, then a particular stone cannot become a part of that house, till it be compacted and conjoyned to the rest: But the former is true, even in the Church of God, which is the spirituall Spouse and Citie of God, living stones, Christians, beleevers must be compacted together, and builded up together, *Ephes.* 2. 21, 22. *Psal.* 122. 3. and therefore the latter is true also, that a particular Christian becomes a member of the Church, a part of that building by being combined with the rest. *Argu.* 1.

Argu. 2. A ſecond Argument may be drawne from the Scripture, *Iſa.* 56. 3, 6, 7. *Let not the ſonne of the ſtranger, that hath joyned himſelfe to the Lord, ſpeake, ſaying, the Lord hath utterly ſeparated me from his people, &c. The ſonnes of the ſtrangers that joyne themſelves to the Lord, to ſerve him, &c. and take hold of my Covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountaine, and make them joyfull in my houſe of Prayer, &c.* Concerning which Scripture, note three things to the preſent purpoſe. Firſt, That theſe ſtrangers were members of Chriſt, true beleevers, joyned to God by Faith; for it is ſaid, *they have joyned themſelves to the Lord*, v. 3 & v. 6. that they loved the name of the Lord, ſerved him, and kept his Sabbaths, *v.* 6. and yet for all this they were not as yet joyned as members of the viſible Church, for if they had been joyned, there would have been no cauſe for ſuch a complaint, *the Lord hath ſeparated me from his people*, v. 3. Beſides, bringing them into the Church as members, and granting them the priviledge of members, is promiſed as a reward and bleſſing upon this their joyning to the Lord by faith and obedience, *v.* 7. And therefore it is not the ſame, but a diſtinct thing from it; the one being promiſed as a reward and bleſſing upon the other. Secondly, The Lord promiſeth that he will make them members of his Church: *Them will I bring to my holy mountaine, and make them joyfull in my houſe of Prayer.* Thirdly, That among other things requiſite to make them members, this was one, *viz.* the taking hold of that Covenant which was between the Church of *Iſrael* and God, *v.* 6. So that hence we may gather, that men may be members of Chriſt, joyned to the Lord by faith and love, and yet for the preſent not be members of the viſible Church: And that when God is ſo gracious to true beleevers, as to make them members of his viſible Church, it is requiſite that they joyne in Covenant before.

Object. "*But might not faith in Chriſt, beleeving in heart on the God of Iſ-*
"*rael, be all the taking hold of the Covenant that is here meant.*

Anſwer. Not ſo, but over and above that, here is alſo meant their open profeſſion of their Faith in the God of *Iſrael*, and open binding of themſelves by Covenant to all ſuch duties of faith and obedience, as God required of the Church of *Iſrael*, and the members thereof. Now diſtinctly take the Anſwer to this Objection in three or foure particular Propoſitions. Firſt, There was a Covenant between the Church of *Iſrael* and God, *Exod.* 19. 5, 6, 7, 8. *Ezek.* 16. 8. *Deut.* 29. 10. *&c.* Secondly, This Covenant was mutuall; not onely

onely a promiſe on Gods part to be their God, and to take them for his people, but alſo reciprocally on their part to give up themſelves unto God to be his people, and to doe the dutie of people to their God; The Covenant is not meerely to receive from God, and promiſe nothing back againe to him; nor doth God binde himſelfe therein, and leave men at libertie, but it is mutuall on both parts, as theſe Scriptures declare; *Gen.* 17. 1. *Exod.* 19. 7. 8. *Deut.* 5. 27. & 26. 16, 17. *Hoſ.* 2. 23. & *Zach.* 13. 9. Thirdly, Hereupon it followes, that if men had not promiſed, and alſo performed, in ſome meaſure of truth, the duties of Faith and obedience unto God, they had not taken hold of the Covenant, but had diſcovenanted themſelves, notwithſtanding all the promiſes of God unto their Fathers or others. Thus though God promiſed *Abraham* to be a God to him, and to his ſeede in their generations, *Gen.* 17. 7. yet the *Iſhmaelites* and *Edomites* deſcending from *Abraham*, were diſcovenanted by not promiſing nor performing thoſe duties of Faith and obedience, which God required on the peoples part: when a Covenant containes promiſes on Gods part, and duties alſo on mans, he doth not take hold of the Covenant that takes one part, and leaves another. Fourthly, To beleeve what God promiſed in the Covenant for his part, and to promiſe in a private way the duties of obedience on mans part, was not ſufficient to make theſe ſtrangers members of the Church, but they muſt doe it openly and in the view of the Church, elſe the Church could have had no warrant to have admitted ſuch into their Fellowſhip, if their faith and obedience had not been viſibly profeſſed, *Exod.* 12. 43. 48 2 *Chron.* 23. 19.

And in as much as the Covenant was mutuall, when theſe ſtrangers did manifeſt their taking hold of the Covenant, they manifeſted and profeſſed both Faith and obedience, both that they beleeved what God promiſed, and that they would be obedient to what he required; If any ſhould have claimed Church-fellowſhip, ſaying, I beleeve the promiſes, but would not binde himſelfe to any duties of Evangelicall obedience, this had been a taking hold of the Covenant by the halves, a taking of one part of it in ſeeming and pretence, and a leaving of another; but it would not have been ſufficient to have brought a man into the fellowſhip of the church: Such of the Congregation of *Iſrael* as would not come to *Hieruſalem* to enter into Covenant, were to be ſeparated from the Church

in the dayes of *Ezra*, *Ezra* 10. 8. And therefore ſuch as being ſtrangers ſhould refuſe to enter into it, could not be admitted into the Church; So that the taking hold of Gods Covenant, which is there required to make theſe ſtrangers members of the Church, is a beleeving in heart on the God of *Iſrael*, and an open profeſſion that they did beleeve, and likewiſe a promiſe of obedience or ſubjection unto the God of *Iſrael*, and an open profeſſing of ſuch obedience and ſubjection; and that is the joyning in Covenant which we ſtand for, before a man can be a member of a Church, even an open profeſſion of Faith and of Obedience.

*Argu.*3. A third Argument is taken from thoſe Scriptures which ſhew that men become members by being added to the Church, or being joyned to them, *Act.* 2. 47. & 5. 13. & 9. 26. If men become members of the Church by being added or joyned, then joyning in Covenant (or profeſſing of ſubjection to the Goſpel or Covenant of God) is that whereby a man becomes a member of a Church: But the former is true, as appeares by the Scriptures forementioned, and therefore the latter is true alſo.

But all the doubt in this Argument will be concerning the conſequence of the *Major* Propoſition; but that may be made good by this reaſon, and the confirmation of it, *viz.* that a man cannot be added or joyned to the Church by any other meanes without this joyning in Covenant. The truth of which Aſſertion will appeare by ſhewing the inſufficiency of all other means, without this joyning in Covenant, and that may be done in Anſwer to the Objections enſuing.

*Object.*1. "*When men were added to the Church, it may be, no more is meant* "*but that God did convert them and worke Faith in their hearts, and that* "*converting of them was the adding of them to the Church.*

Anſwer. This cannot be all; for, firſt, *Saul* was converted and had faith wrought in his heart, and yet he was not at the firſt received for a member of the Church at *Hieruſalem* (though he aſſayed to be joyned unto them,) till they were better ſatisfied in his ſpirituall eſtate by the teſtimony of *Barnabas*, Act. 9. 26, 27, 28. And thoſe ſtrangers, *Iſa.* 56. (as was ſaid before) were joyned to the Lord by being converted, and having Faith wrought in their hearts, and yet they doe lament it with griefe, that they were not joyned as members to the viſible Church: *The Lord hath ſeparated me from his people*, ſay they, *ver.* 3. The old ſaying is true concerning the viſible

viſible Church, *There are many wolves within, and many ſheepe without.* Secondly, Thoſe that were joyned were beleevers before they joyned; for it is ſaid, *divers were added*, vet. 14. Thirdly, Thoſe that were added to the Church, were added and joyned to them by ſuch an act as others durſt not put forth, *Act.* 5. 13. *Of the reſt durſt no man joyne unto them*, and therefore it was not by the irreſiſtable act of God in converting of them, but by ſome voluntary act of their owne choice and conſent; for Gods converting grace depends not upon mans daring, or not daring to receive it. If to be joyned be no more but to be converted, then when it is ſaid, *Some durſt not be joyned*, the meaning ſhould be, they durſt not be converted, nor ſuffer Faith to be wrought in them; which is groſſe Arminianiſme, ſuſpending the converting grace of God upon the free will of the creature. Fourthly, And as this joyning which others durſt not doe, cannot be meant of being converted; So if it be well conſidered, what the thing was wherein they durſt not joyne, it may appeare that it was nothing els but this, that they durſt not agree, and engage themſelves to be of their body and ſocietie; that is, they durſt not joyne in Covenant with them. For it cannot be meant of dwelling in the Towne with them, for this they both durſt doe and did: nor is it onely of joyning to heare the Word in their aſſembly, for this alſo they durſt doe, and many did it in great multitudes, ſo that many by hearing the Word became beleevers, and were added to the Lord both of men and women, *ver.* 14. at this very time when it is ſaid of ſome they durſt not joyne unto them: Nor is it of joyning to them in affection, or approbation of their way, for this they alſo durſt doe and did expreſſe ſo much in magnifying and commending them, when yet they durſt not joyne unto them, *ver.* 13. Which magnifying of them doth imply that they heard their doctrine, and ſaw their practiſe, and approved it, and highly commended them for the ſame: Wherefore ſeeing this joyning, which ſome durſt not doe, cannot be meant of being converted, nor of joyning in habitation, nor of joyning in affection, not in hearing the Word in their Aſſembly, nor of approbation, and expreſſions that way, it remaineth that it muſt be meant of joyning in that neere relation of Church-fellowſhip amongſt them, ſo as to be engaged by voluntary conſent and agreement to be members of their Church. Fiftly, If joyning to the Church, were no more but to be converted,

verted, then he that were converted were joyned as a member of every viſible Church throughout the world, which were a great confuſion of that Order, and diſtinction of Churches, which the Lord hath appointed.

Obj. 2. "*Men may be joyned to the Church, in heartie affection and love, and* "*yet without any Covenant.*

Anſw. True, but this will not make them members of that Church, for then *Saul* was a member of the Church at *Hieruſalem*, afore he was joyned a member, for he was joyned to them in heartie affection afore, and therefore aſſayed to joyne as a member; and ſo were they that durſt not joyne, *Act.* 5. 13. yea then a man ſhould be a member of many Churches, yea of all Chriſtian Churches in the world; for he is to love them, and beare heartie affection to them all; The true members of the Churches in *England* are united in heartie affection, to the Churches in *Scotland*, in *Holland*, in *Fraunce*, in *New-England*, &c. And yet they are not members of all theſe Churches, nor ſubject to their cenſures as members are.

Obj. 3. "*But the reaſon of that is becauſe they doe not dwell among them in* "*the ſame Towne.*

Anſwer. Neither would habitation with them in the ſame Towne, make a man a member of the Church there, if there be no more then ſo. Suppoſe *Saul* to have dwelt in the ſame houſe afore his converſion in which he dwelt after, which is not unpoſſible nor unlikely; yet we ſee he was no member of the Church at *Hieruſalem*, afore his converſion, no nor of ſome time after, though he might have dwelt in an houſe in the midſt of the Chriſtians, and Church-members there. The members of the *Dutch* and *French* Churches in *London*, or other Townes in *England*, are not members of the *Engliſh*-Congregations or Churches, no more then the *Engliſh* are of theirs, and yet they dwell promiſcuouſly together in the ſame Streete of the ſame Towne. Towne-dwelling would not make a man a free-man of a Company in *London*, or ſome other Corporation; for many others dwell in the Towne with them; yea it may be in the ſame ſtreete, that are not free of their Company, and ſo it is in this caſe.

Object. 4. "*But the reaſon why ſuch as dwell in Towne with the Church, are* "*not members thereof, may be, becauſe they frequent not their Aſſem-* "*blies.*

Idiots

Idiots and Infidells might come into the publick meetings among the *Corinthians*, 1 *Cor.* 14. 23, 24, 25. yet Idiots and Infidells were not therefore members of the Church. And *Saul* after his converſion might have come in among the Church in time of publick duties, and have ſeene and heard all that they had done: yet this would not have made him of one body with them. Some *Indians*, *Moores*, and other naturall perſons come into our meetings in *New-England*, ſome of their owne accord, and others by the Command or Counſell of their Maſters and Governours, yet no man can ſay, that all theſe are hereby made Church-members. Wherefore ſeeing neither converſion, nor loving affection, nor cohabitation, nor coming into their meetings, doth joyne a man as a member of the viſible Church (for ſome men have all theſe, and yet are not members, and others are ſometimes members of the viſible Churches, and yet want ſome of theſe, are hypocrites and want ſound converſion) it remaineth therefore that as ſound converſion makes a man fit matter for a Church; So profeſſion of his Faith, and of his ſubjection to the Goſpel, and the Churches approbation, and acceptance of him (which is the ſumme of Church-Covenant) is the formall cauſe that gives him the being of a member. *Anſw.*

"*But joyning doth not alway ſignifie joyning in Covenant; Philip joy-*
"*ned to the Eunnuchs chariote, and duſt to mens feete,* Act. 8. 29. &
"Luke 10, 11. *and yet there was no Covenant, and therefore men may*
"*joyne to the Church without any Covenant.* *Object.* 5.

The word indeed may expreſſe any cloſe joyning, whether naturall, (as the branch is joyned to the Vine, or an arme or other member to the body) or artificiall, as when two ſtickes were joyned to become one in *Ezekiels* hand, *Ezek.* 37. Or when Carpenters or Maſons doe joyne pieces of ſtone or Timber together, to make one houſe, *Neh.* 4. 6. *Ezr.* 4. 12. but is not onely the force of the word that is ſtood upon. But when joyning is uſed to expreſſe ſuch joyning, wherein a man voluntarily takes on him a new relation, there it alwayes implyes a Covenant, whether the relation be morall and civill, or religious and Eccleſiaſticall: We ſpeake of voluntary relation, for there are naturall relations, as betweene parents and children: and theſe need no Covenant, there is no Covenant to make a man a Parent, or a childe; There are alſo violent relations, as between Conquerour and Captives, and *Anſw.*

in theſe there is no Covenant neither; but others are voluntary, and theſe alwayes imply a Covenant, and are founded therein, whether they be morall and civill (as between husband and wife, *Pro.* 2. 17. between Maſter and ſervants, *Luk.* 15. 15. between Prince and ſubject, between Partners in Trade, 2 *Chro.* 20. 35, 36, 37. where the Covenant or agreement is, that men ſhall bare ſuch a ſhare of charges, and receive ſuch a ſhare of profits:) or religious, as between Miniſter and people, between the Church and the members: all theſe are done by way of Covenant. A man cannot joyne himſelfe to a woman as her husband, but by way of Covenant: A man cannot joyne himſelfe to another as a ſervant, or apprentiſe, but by way of Covenant; And ſo may we ſay of all the reſt; nor into any body corporate, but by the ſame way and means. If men be united into a body politick or incorporate, a man cannot be ſaid to be joyned to them by meere heartie affection, unleſſe withall he joynes himſelfe unto them by ſome Contract or Covenant. Now of this nature is every particular Church, a body incorporate, 1 *Cor.* 12. 27. *Yee are the body of Chriſt, &c.* and hath power to caſt out, 1 *Cor.* 5. 13. and to forgive and receive in Penitents, 2 *Cor.* 2. 7 8 as a body incorporate; and therefore he that will joyne unto them, muſt doe it by way of Covenant or Agreement; and ſo this Anſwer to this Objection, may be a fourth Argument to prove the point in hand, that joyning in Covenant is that which makes a man, a member of a Church.

Argu. 4. All voluntary relations, all relations which are neither naturall nor violent, are entred into by way of Covenant.

But he that joynes into a Church as a member, or enters into a Church, doth take upon him ſuch a relation; Therefore joyning to a Church as a member, is by way of Covenant.

Argu. 5. A fifth Argument may be drawne from the power which all Churches, Officers and members, have over all their members in the Lord. If all Churches, Officers, and members, have power in the Lord over all their members, then joyning in Covenant is neceſſary to make a man a member of a Church, but the former is true, therefore the latter is true alſo.

The Aſſumption in this Argument, that all Churches have power over their members, is proved from 1 *Cor.* 5. 4, 5. 13. where the Apoſtle reproveth the *Corinthians* for ſuffering the Inceſtuous

ceſtuous man amongſt them, and commands them to deliver him to Satan, and caſt him out from amongſt them. Now this he would not have done, if they had had no power over him, or if there had been any roome for them to ſay, wee have nothing to doe with him, wee have no power over him. And the ſame is prooved in other Scriptures alſo; as, *Mat.* 18. 17. *Pſal.* 149. 6. 7, 8, 9.

And the Conſequence of the *Major* Propoſition, *viz.* that then members doe engage themſelves by Covenant, is proved by this reaſon; That Churches have no power over ſuch as have not engaged themſelves by Covenant, and committed power unto them, by profeſſing to be ſubject to all the Ordinances of Chriſt amongſt them.

The truth whereof may appeare by two Reaſons:

Firſt, Becauſe all Chriſtians have power and right, *jure divino*, to chooſe their owne Officers to whom they commit their ſoules, *Act.* 6. & 1. & 14 23. where the word χειροτονησαντες, imports chooſing by Election: and ſo the word is uſed and tranſlated, 2 *Cor.* 8. 19. *he was choſen by the Churches, &c.* It is not miniſteriall gifts that makes a man a Miniſter to every Church, nor inveſteth him with ſpirituall power over them, nor though he dwell amongſt them, unleſſe they call him, and he accept of that call: And as they have power to chooſe their Officers, ſo likewiſe to chooſe their brethren according to God, *Rom.* 14. 1. Now if they have power to chooſe their Officers and brethren, then none can have power over them as Officers and brethren, without their owne conſent, and whom they never choſe, nor promiſed by any Covenant or Engagement to be ſubject to the Lord.

Secondly, If the Church ſhould exerciſe any Act of Church-power over ſuch a man as never entred into Covenant with them (ſuppoſe to Excommunicate him for whoredome or drunkenneſſe, or the like) the man might proteſt againſt their Act, and their Sentence, as *Coram non judice*, and they could not juſtifie their proceedings, if indeed there have paſſed no Covenant or Engagement between him and them. If he ſhall ſay, you have nothing to doe to paſſe Sentence or Cenſure upon me, I am none of your Church, but of another Church; Suppoſe in *Holland*, in *France*, *&c.* and I am onely here now for Merchandiſe ſake, or upon ſome other occaſion: what ſhall they ſay to ſtop his mouth, if there never

ver paſſed any Covenant between him and them.

Object. "*But Miniſters have power over the people by the word of God,* "Heb. 13. 17. 1 Theſ. 5. 12. 1 Tim. 5. 17. *and not by mens engaging* "*themſelves by Covenant.*

Anſwer. But what is it that makes men Miniſters to ſuch a people, Officers to ſuch a Church, or maketh them ſheepe of my flocke? Is it not thoſe Scriptures that makes every man a Paſtour, or Teacher, or Ruler to a people, unleſſe they call him to that Office; and then in ſo doing they Covenant and Engage themſelves to be ſubject to him in the Lord, and then thoſe Scriptures take hold on them. One might as well ſay, it is not the Covenanting of a wife to her husband that gives him power over her, but the Word of God; For as the Word of God commands people to obey their Miniſters, ſo it commands *wives to be ſubject to their husbands*, Epheſ. 5. 22. And yet all men know, a man cannot take this woman for his wife but by Covenant. So that if ſhee once makes her ſelfe a wife by her owne voluntary Covenant, then the word of God takes hold on her, and bindes her to doe the duties of a wife: but if ſhee hath made no Covenant, the man hath no power over her as her husband, neither is ſhee his wife; So if men once make themſelves members of ſuch a Church, ſheepe of ſuch a mans flocke, by their own voluntary Covenant, then the word of God takes hold of them, and bindes them to doe the duties of members to their fellow-brethren, and of people to their Paſtours or Miniſters. But if they never choſe ſuch a man to be their Miniſter, nor Covenanted to be ſubject to him in the Lord, he then can have no power over them as a Miniſter unto them, becauſe they have right to choſe their owne Miniſters.

Argu. 6. A ſixth Argument may be taken from the diſtinction that is between members, and not members. If there be by the word of God a diſtinction, between members of the Church and ſuch as are no members, then joyning in Covenant is neceſſary to the being of a member; but the former is true, as appeares 1 *Cor.* 5. 12. Some are within, and may be judged by the Church, and others are without, and may not: and therefore the latter is true alſo. And the reaſon of the Conſequence is becauſe there is nothing elſe without this joyning in Covenant, that can ſufficiently diſtinguiſh them; It is not Faith and Grace in their hearts, for ſome men are members of the viſible Church, and yet have no

Grace,

Grace, and others may have Grace, and yet be no members, and therefore this is not the thing that doth diſtinguiſh them, nor is it affection, nor cohabitation, nor every approbation of the Word of God, and the wayes of his Church, not comming into their Aſſemblies to heare the Word; But theſe things were touched before, and therefore may be here the more briefly paſſed over.

And ſo much ſhall ſuffice to have ſpoken of the ſecond particular, concerning the uſe of Church-Covenant, that it is by joyning therein that a particular perſon becomes a member of a Church.

But here it will be needfull to remove ſundry Objections, which may ſeeme to ſome to be of great weight againſt Church-Covenant, that ſo by the removing of them, the truth may be the more cleared, to fuller ſatisfaction, if it be the will of God.

Obj. 1. " *Church-Covenant is a Terme that is not found in Scripture.*

Anſwer. Firſt, So is Sacrament, Trinitie, &c. and yet thoſe termes may be lawfully uſed, becauſe the thing meant thereby is found.

Secondly, But ſeeing the Covenant is between the Lord and his Church, as the two parties that are confederate, it is all one whether it be called the Lords Covenant, or the Church-Covenant: As when *Mamre*, *Aver*, & *Eſchol* were confederate with *Abraham*, Gen. 14. 13. might not one truely ſay, *Abraham* was confederate with them? Relatives doe mutually put and eſtabliſh one another.

Thirdly, The Scripture allowes both the Lords Covenant with the Church, *Eze.* 16. 8. & the peoples covenant or Saints covenant, or Churches Covenant with him, *Deut.* 29. 12. *Pſal.* 50. 5. *Jer.* 50. 5.

Fourthly, There is good reaſon for both the words; both the Lords Covenant, and the Church-Covenant, becauſe both are confederate; And for that of Church-Covenant, there is this reaſon alſo, *viz.* to diſtinguiſh it from other Covenants, as a marriage-Covenant, *Pro.* 2. 17. and a brotherly Covenant, 1 *Sam.* 20. 8. The Church-Covenant being thus called not onely becauſe they are a Church, or members thereof that make it, but alſo becauſe they enter into it in reference to Church-Eſtate and Church-duties: The duties which they bind themſelves unto in this Covenant being ſuch eſpecially as concern a Church and the members thereof.

Object. 2. " *But this Church-Covenant puts ſome diſparagement upon the Cove-*
" *nant of Grace, which every beleever is already entred into with God,*
" *and ſeeme to charge the ſame with inſufficiency; for every ſecond Cove-*
" *nant doth argue that the firſt was not faultleſſe,* Heb. 8. 7.

Answ. 1. A second Covenant doth argue that the first was not faultlesse, where the Covenants are contrary one to another, as the covenant of Grace, and the covenant of works are, and so it is most true, that the bringing in of the free Covenant of Grace did argue that righteousnes and life could not be attained by the Law, or Covenant of works; for if there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousnesse should have been by the Law. *Gal.* 3. 21. *Rom.* 8. 3.

2. But if it be the same Covenant that is renewed or made againe, though upon a new occasion, no man can say that entring into the same the second time, or a third, or a fourth, doth disanull the first, or cast dispatagement upon the same. The covenant of works given to *Adam* was not blamed or faulted, because it was renewed in *Sinai*. The Covenant of Grace was first given to *Adam* in Paradise after his fall, afterward to *Abraham*, then to the people of Israel under types and shadows; And againe after the coming of Christ in the flesh; yet none of these doth disanull the former, or argue the same to be faulty; and the reason is, because it is still the same Covenant though renewed upon new occasions; and in some particulars in some other manner. And the like we say concerning Church-Covenant, or the Covenant which a man makes when he enters into the Church, *viz.* that it is not another Covenant contrary to the Covenant of Grace, which every beleever is brought into at his first conversion, but an open profession of a mans subjection to that very Covenant, specially in the things which concerne Church estate, into which estate the man is now entring.

Obj. 3. "*It is not lawfull to make such a Covenant as the Church-Covenant,* "*because it is not in our power to keep it, and we do not know whether* "*God will give us power.*

Answ. This ground is very true, that no man hath power of himselfe to any thing that good is, but all a mans power and abilitie must come of God through Christ, 2. *Cor.* 3. 5. *Phil.* 2. 13. *Joh.* 15. 5. But the inference is not good, that therefore it should be unlawfull to ento into Church-Covenant: for 1. By the same reason, all promises are unlawfull, and all covenants whatsoever; as the covenant of marriage, the covenant of service, yea and the personall covenant of Grace, when a particular soule promiseth faith and new obedience; for there is none of these, no not the covenant of Marriage,

Marriage, which a man is able of himſelf to keep, as the adultery of *David* and *Bathſheba*, among others, doth plainly prove.

2. God hath promiſed to give power to them that in ſelf-deniall ſeek it of him, and truſt to his promiſe for it. *Ezek.* 36. 27. *Jer.* 31. 33. *Rom.* 6. 14. *Jer.* 32. 40. The true inference therefore from this ground, from mans diſabilitie to performe were this, that therefore a man ſhould not enter into Church Covenant in his owne ſtrength, for that was *Peters* fault in promiſing not to deny Chriſt, but to die with him rather: but Church-Covenant, as alſo all other promiſes, ſhould be entred into, in an humble looking up to Chriſt Jeſus for help and aſſiſtance to performe. *Thou therefore my ſonne, be ſtrong in the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus*, 2. *Tim.* 2. 1.

Obj. 4. "*God diſalloweth covenants of mans making (and ſo our Church-*
"*Covenant) in thoſe words, But not by thy Covenant.* Ezek. 16. 61.

Anſw. God doth not reprove them there for making Covenant, for then he were contrary to himſelfe, who elſewhere called them to do it, *Exod.* 29. *Deut.* 29. and commended them for it, *Pſal.* 50. 5. Yea and in that very place of *Ezek.* 16. acknowledgeth a Covenant betweene him and them, *ver.* 60. 62. But the meaning is, he would do them good, but not for their good keeping the Covenant of works, for they had very ſinfully broken it, *ver.* 59. but even as he ſaith elſewhere, not for their ſakes, or for their righteouſneſſe, *Ezek.* 36. 32. *Deut.* 9. 4, 5, 6. But what force is there in this arguing, *viz.* If God will do us good, but not for our good keeping the covenant of works, then it is not lawfull to promiſe obedience to the covenant of Grace, in ſuch things as concerne Church eſtate; All men may eaſily ſee that here is a plaine *non ſequitur*.

Obj. 5. "*This entring into Covenant may keep out many good men from joyn-*
"*ing to the Churches, becauſe they are not ſatisfied about it: and therefore*
"*it is better laid aſide.*

Anſw. It is not impoſſible, but good men may for a time be unſatisfied about it, till they underſtand the nature and uſe of it, and yet the thing be warrantable enough for all that in the ſight of God; the Tribes were troubled at the Altar ſet up upon the banks of Jordan by the two Tribes and an halfe, till they underſtood the intent and uſe of it, and for what purpoſe it was erected: and then they were ſatisfied. *Joſh.* 22. And the ſame may be ſaid of *Peters* eating with the Gentiles, which at the firſt was very offenſive to them of the

circumcision, till they understood what *Peter* had to say for his defence therein, and then they rested well satisfied, *Act.* 11.

But if men understand what the Church-Covenant is, there is no reason that good men should be troubled at it; it being nothing else but a promise of obedience unto the Gospel of Christ, or of such duties as the Gospel requireth of all Christians in Church-estate: For, will good men refuse to obey the Gospel, or submit to the ordinances of Christ? or will they refuse to professe and promise so much? If a man understand what it is, and what we meane by it, and yet refuse to enter into it when he hath opportunitie thereto, such refusing is no part of his goodnesse, but is to be reckoned amongst his corruptions; It is ignorance at the best, and if not so, then it may be perversenesse of will, or some want of will to performe obedience to the Gospel. And surely there is smal hope that such would yeeld subjection and obedience to the Gospel, who do refuse to professe or promise it.

Obj. 6. "*But the Scripture,* Act. 2. 41. *tels of joyning to the Church without any Covenant. For it was not possible that* 3000. *should enter into covenant in one day.*

Answ. Two things may be said in Answer to this Objection.

First, that 3000. were not so many, but that joyning in Covenant might easily be done by them all, in one day. For, 1. it was at Penticost, at which time of the yeer the dayes were at the longest: And, 2. the Scripture tels us, that *David* made a Covenant with all the Tribes of Israel in one day, 2. *Sam.* 5 1, 2, 3. The Articles of the covenant betweene *David* and the Tribes, and so betweene this 3000. and the Lord might be openly declared, and they both the one and the other might by some signe or other, expresse their consent thereunto in one day.

Secondly, as joyning in Covenant is a thing that might be done, so it is more then probable that indeed it was done, by those 3000. soules. For it is said, *ver.* 41. *that they gladly received the word,* that is, they openly professed that they did with all their hearts receive it, for this receiving of the Word is noted as a condition, upon which they were admitted to baptisme, and therefore it was not onely an inward receiving of it in their hearts, but also an open professing that they did receive it; for an inward receiving of it in their hearts, without an open professing thereof outwardly, would not have been sufficient for the admitting of them unto Baptisme.

Now

Now this Word which they received was an exhortation to Repentance for ſinne, and to Faith in the promiſe, *ver.* 38. 39. and to obedience in ſevering themſelves from others, and ſaving themſelves from that untoward generation, *ver.* 40. And therefore when they openly profeſſed, that they gladly received this word, there was an open profeſſing of their Repentance for ſinne, *ver.* 40. of their Faith in the promiſe, and of obedience to the Commandement, which is nothing elſe, but the very ſumme of Church-Covenant: yea, and further, their very preparation to this repentance, faith and obedience, in that true compunction and ſorrow of ſoul, was alſo openly made manifeſt. *ver.* 37.

"*But yet there would not be ſuch long narrations, of every one ſeve-* *Reply.*
"*rally as now are uſed, when men do enter into Church-Covenant, when*
"*each one makes a good long ſpeech, in the profeſſion of his Faith and Re-*
"*pentance.*

When the thing is certaine, as was ſhewed before, that they did *Anſw.*
openly profeſſe repentance, faith and obedience, it is not difference in the length or largeneſſe of their ſpeeches in expreſſing of themſelves, that can make any difference in the thing: *Majus & minus non diverſificant ſpeciem.* And we denie not but they might be briefer, becauſe there was not ſuch need they ſhould be long in regard of ſome difference betweene them and us, their time and ours: Firſt there were the Apoſtles preſent to heare their confeſſions, and to judge thereof, who were men of very good diſcerning, and therefore briefer expreſſing of mens ſelves might ſuffice; whereas the beſt Chriſtians, yea the beſt Miniſters amongſt us are not to be compared to the Apoſtles; and therefore as we need more time for ſtudy, and for preparation for our Sermons then they did: ſo likewiſe we need more time to heare, and try the ſoundneſſe of mens repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Yet this we may adde withall, that if the Apoſtles and thoſe primative Chriſtians, men of ſuch excellent diſcerning were ſometimes deceived, and could not alwayes ſo diſcern, but that ſome Hypocrites would creep into the Church: as the example of *Ananias* and *Saphira* doth witneſſe; how much more need is there, that the Churches of God in theſe dayes (being far inferiour to them) ſhould be very watchfull and circumſpect in

trying the ſpirituall eſtates of them that offer to come into the Church?

Secondly, their times alſo differed from ours: for their Chriſtianitie was a matter of reproach and danger of excommunication, *Joh.* 9. 22. of impriſonment, *Act.* 4. 3. and 5. 18. and the like. And therefore to ſee men now to make open profeſſion of their faith in Chriſt Jeſus, whoſe ſervants and diſciples were ſo hated, and who himſelfe but a while before was crucified, this was not an ordinarie matter: and therefore in words, men might be the briefer when they came to be received into the Church: But our times in *New England* do not perſecute Chriſt, and Chriſtians, and Chriſtian Churches, but countenance them, and protect them; and therefore there is more need now to be more ſtudious in examination of mens eſtates when they offer themſelves for Church members: when the Jews were in favour, many of the people of the Land became Jews, *Eſth.* 8. 17.

Obj. 7. "*But why is there ſo little proofe of this Church-Covenant in the New* "*Teſtament?*

Anſw. 1. Suppoſe the New Teſtament ſaid nothing of it, yet it might have ground ſufficient from the Scriptures of the old Teſtament; for if it was Gods revealed will in thoſe dayes, that a companie ſhould become a Church, and particular perſons become members of that Church by way of Covenant, we may be ſure it is ſo now likewiſe, unleſſe covenanting were peculiar to the Jewiſh Pædigogie; indeed if it had never been uſed in thoſe times, but were ſome new ordinance, peculiar to the dayes of the New Teſtament, in ſuch caſes alſo a ground from the Scriptures of the New Teſtament were neceſſarie, as there is in all ſuch things wherein there is any change or variation, from what was uſed in thoſe times afore Chriſt, as that there ſhould not be Nationall Churches, but congregationall, and not one viſible Church, but many, that there ſhould be baptiſme, and the Lords Supper: theſe are matters that are not found in the old Teſtament, nor were appointed to be uſed in thoſe dayes, and therefore we muſt have warrant for them in the New, and ſo we have. But for the Covenant it is otherwiſe, it is no new ordinance peculiar to the dayes of the Goſpel, nor any Leviticall ordinance peculiar to the Jewiſh Pedigogie; and therefore the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament that give warrant for it, may be ſufficient as hath been ſhewed afore.

2. And

2. And yet there is not wanting good warrant for it, that it ought to be uſed, in the dayes of the New Teſtament. For, 1. the Prophets do foretell it, *Iſa* 56. 6, 7. and 44 5. and *Jer.* 50.5. *Ezek.* 20. 37. and in ſundrie other places, to omit the reſt at this time, becauſe ſome of them have been ſpoken of before; Onely let thoſe words of *Iſa.* 44. 5. be well conſidered, and ſee if they do not plainly hold forth that in the dayes of the New Teſtament, men ſhould openly profeſſe their faith, and ſolemnly bind themſelves by Covenant to be the Lords people, one ſhall ſay, I am the Lords, and another ſhall call himſelf by the name of *Jacob*, and another ſhall ſubſcribe with his hand, and ſirname himſelf by the name of *Iſrael.* Theſe words are ſo plaine for open profeſſing of faith in the Lord, and open binding of mens ſelves by Covenant unto him, as we conceive nothing need be more.

2 The Apoſtles do ſufficiently teſtifie, that ſuch a thing was practiſed in their dayes, elſe how ſhould we underſtand that fellowſhip in the Goſpel in its full latitude and breadth, *Phil.* 1. 5. if this combining into Church fellowſhip be no part thereof; yea when it is ſaid, *they continued ſtedfaſtly*, or as the word προσκαρτερουντες, may well be tranſlated, *they ſtrongly did cleave together*, or hold together in ſuch a Fellowſhip, which was not preaching and hearing the doctrine of the Apoſtles, nor Sacraments, nor Prayer, but a thing diſtinct from all theſe. If this combining themſelves into a ſpirituall fellowſhip and ſocietie of Church-ſtate be no part thereof, we know not how to underſtand it, nor what that fellowſhip ſhould meane; If Doctrine, and Sacraments, and Prayer had not been particularly mentioned, in the ſame place, it might have been thought that the Fellowſhip in which they ſo ſteadfaſtly clave together had been no more, but their coming together to obſerve theſe ſaid ordinances, and their communion therein. But when all theſe are particularly mentioned, and Fellowſhip mentioned among them, as a thing diſtinct from the reſt, we may not confound it with the reſt. We might as well ſay, that by doctrine is meant Sacraments, and by Sacraments is meant Prayer; as to ſay that by Fellowſhip is meant nothing elſe but the exerciſe of doctrine, and Sacraments, and Prayer. And if theſe as they are diſtinctly named, be diſtinct ordinances, and may not be confounded, then Fellowſhip being named in the ſame manner imports ſomething diſtinct from them all, and may not be confounded with

with them, nor with any of them, no more then the other may be confounded one with another. And if ſo, then as this Fellowſhip may import, the communion of their gift and goods one for the helpe of another, ſo it muſt firſt of all imply a combining of themſelves into Church-ſtate by mutuall agreement, conſent, or covenant.

Furthermore, when the Apoſtle writeth, that by experience of the *Corinthians* liberall contribution to the poore Saints, men glorified God for their profeſſed ſubjection to the Goſpel of Chriſt, 2. *Cor.* 9. 13. he plainly imployes thereby, that the *Corinthians* had made a profeſſion or promiſe of ſuch ſubjection to the Goſpel as did comprehend this particular of diſtributing to the neceſſitie of the Saints, among other things. And their liberall diſtribution which he there ſpeaks of, was looked at as one point of their reall performance of that ſubjection to the Goſpel, which they had before profeſſed, and promiſed. Now the Church-Covenant is nothing elſe, but the profeſſing or promiſing of ſuch ſubjection, and therefore this place is another proofe of Church-Covenant. Beſides, it hath been ſhewed afore in *Argument* 3. that thoſe places which ſpeake of being added to the Church, of joyning, or aſſaying to joyne unto the Church, *Act.* 2. 47. and 5 13. and 9 26. are not expounded according to the full meaning of them, when they are underſtood of any other joyning, if joyning in Covenant be left out. And therefore the Scriptures of the New Teſtament do beare good witneſſe unto Church-Covenant, though, as we ſaid before, the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament might have been ſufficient if the New Teſtament had ſpoken nothing of it.

Obj. 8. "*But Baptiſme makes men members of the viſible Church, and there-*
"*fore the Covenant is needleſſe.*

Anſw. This is anſwered in the Anſwer to the fourth of the 32. Queſtions, where it is ſhewed at large that Baptiſme is a ſeale of the Covenant betweene God and the Church, but neither makes the Church, nor members of the Church, nor alwayes ſo much as proves men to be members.

Obj. 9. "*This Church-Covenant is a late deviſe, and was not known in anci-*
"*ent time, and therefore is to be rejected.*

Anſw. Firſt, True Antiquitie is that of the Scriptures. Now ſith Church Covenant is warranted by the Scripture, as hath been

ſhewed

shewed before in this discourse, it cannot be charged to want true Antiquitie. When the Papists are wont to charge the doctrine of Protestants with Novelty, and such as was never heard of before *Luther*, the Orthodoxe are wont to answer, that if the doctrine do not agree with the Scripture, then let it be condemned for Noveltie; and if it do, it is warranted by the best Antiquitie, even the testimonie of God himself who is the Antient of dayes: Our Faith, saith Doctor *White*, is in all points the same that is contained in the Scripture, and so consequently of the same Antiquitie: and therefore all they that say it came up but of late, must first prove it contrary to the Word of God, or else hold their peace. *White, Way*, 44. 1. And the same we say in this particular of the Church-Covenant.

Secondly, And yet they that search the Stories and Writers of the times and ages next after the Apostles, may find some testimonie of Church-Covenant in those dayes: For instance, *Justine Martyr* in his Apol. 2. makes mention of three things which were required of all that were admitted into the Church as members, καινοποίησις, πίστις, καὶ ὑπόσχεσις, that is regeneration, and soundnesse in the Faith, and a promise to walke in obedience to the Gospel. And generally this was the practise of all those times, that never any man was admitted to Baptisme, nor his children neither, but they put him to answer three questions, *Abrenuntios?* whereto he answered, *Abrenuntio. Credis?* whereto his answer was, *Credo:* and *Spondes?* to which he answered, *Spondeo*. So that here was an open declaration of his Repentance from dead works, and of the soundnesse of his Faith, in the two first particulars, and an open binding himself by covenant or promise to walke according to the Gospel, in the third. But much needs not to be said in this point, unto them that do acknowledge Scripture Antiquitie to be sufficient, though after times should be found to swerve from the Rules and Patterns that are therein contained.

" *If Church-Covenant be so necessarie, then all the Reformed Churches* " *are to be condemned as no Churches; for they have no such Co-* " *venant.* *Obj.* 10.

They that have knowne those Churches, not onely by their writings, and confessions of their faith, in Synods and otherwise; but also by living amongst them, and being eye-witnesses of their Order, do report otherwise of them, *viz.* that they are combined *Answ.*

together by ſolemne Covenant with God and one another. *Zepperus*, ſpeaking of the manner, uſed in the reformed Churches, in admitting the children of Church-members to the Lords Table, when they came to age, and have been ſufficiently catechiſed, and inſtructed in the doctrine of Religion, tells us, that ſuch children are admitted to the Lords table, by publick profeſſion of Faith, and entring into Covenant. "*Conſuetum eſt*, ſaith he, *ut qui per ætatem inque Doctrinâ Catecheticâ profectum ad ſacram Cœnam primum admittuntur, fidei confeſſionem coram totâ Eccleſiâ publicè edant per parentes aut qui parentum loco ſunt, juſſu miniſtri, in Eccleſiæ conſpectum producti: quòdque in illa confeſſione, per Dei gratiam perſtare, ac, juxta illam, vitam inſtituere, inſuper etiam diſciplinæ Eccleſiaſticæ ultrò ac ſponte ſuâ ſubjicere ſeſe velint, ſpondeant atque ſtipulentur, Polit. Eccleſ. lib. 1. cap. 14. p. 158.* that is, The manner is, "that they who by reaſon of age and proficiencie in the doctrine "of Catechiſme are firſt admitted to the Lords Supper, ſhould "publickly before the whole Church make confeſſion of their "faith, being brought forth into the ſight of the Church by their "parents, or them that are inſtead of parents, at the appoint-"ment of the Miniſter; and likewiſe ſhould promiſe and cove-"nant by the grace of God to continue in that Faith which they "have confeſſed, and to lead their lives according to it; yea, and "moreover to ſubject themſelves freely and willingly to the diſ-"cipline of the Church. Theſe words we ſee are full and plaine, that children are not in thoſe Churches received to the Lords Supper, without perſonall confeſſion of Faith, and entring into Covenant before; And if they tooke this courſe with children come to age, there is as much reaſon, or more, that the ſame courſe ſhould be holden with men of yeers, when they are admitted members. And ſo the ſame *Zepperus*, ſpeaking of the conſociation of Churches amongſt themſelves by mutuall confederation, hath theſe words, which as they may be applyed to the combining of many Churches, ſo may they be combining of many members of the ſame Church, "*Κοινωνία illa τῶν ἁγίων, quam in Symbolo profite nunc Apoſtolico, nihil aliud hic requirit, & vult, quam obligationem omnium Eccleſiæ membrorum & confœderationem, &c.* "that is, that communion of Saints which we profeſſe in the "Creed, doth require and meane nothing elſe but an obligation "of all the members of the Church, and a binding of them to-

gether

"gether by Covenant. *Polit. Eccleſ. li. 3 c. 8. p. 721.*

To theſe teſtimonies of *Zepperus*, thoſe words may be added of Mr. *Parker* our own countreyman, a man of ſingular note for learning and holineſſe, who alſo himſelfe lived ſometimes beyond Sea in the reformed Churches, and there ended his dayes, ſo that we may ſafely give the more credit to his teſtimonie, he having ſo good meanes fully to know the ſtate and order of thoſe Churches. Now he ſpeaketh of a " *Solennis forma abſque quâ in* " *Eccleſiæ alicujus communionem nullus ritè recipitur*: of a ſolemne " forme, without which no man is rightly received into the com- " munion of the Church, hath theſe words. *Hic mos ille eſt refor-* " *matarum Eccleſiarum non ſolum in lapſis reſtituendis, ſed in extraneis,* " *imò quibuſcunque recipiendis qui ad habitandum alicubi conſident,* " *etſi fortè in Eccleſiâ illius loci quo ante commorabantur, juxta hanc* " *formam admiſſi prius fuerant. Examinat Presbyterium, plebs conſen-* " *tit, quiſque teſtes vitæ ſuæ ſecum adfert, vel teſtimonia ſaltem: pub-* " *licatur nomen cujuſque competentis pro concione, admonetur quiſque* " *ſiquid habeat quod excipiat, ut denunciet presbyteris. Si nihil contrà* " *adferatur, admittitur quidem, ſed non niſi ſolerni pactione cum Deo* " *& cum Eccleſiâ. Spondet verò Eccleſiæ, ſe ambulaturum prout ſan-* " *ctam illam communionem decet; Diſciplinæ illius Eccleſiæ ſubjacere* " *velle, ſe fratribus illius communionis invigilaturum juxta Chriſti præ-* " *ceptum, Matth 18. 17. ut præveniantur ſanenturque ſcandala, &* " *illi ad ſtudium bonorum operum provehantur.* That is, This is the " manner of the reformed Churches, not onely in reſtoring ſuch " as have fallen, but in admitting of ſtrangers, yea of all whoever " they be, who do ſit down in any place for habitation, though " perhaps they have been formerly admitted after the ſame man- " ner in the Church where they have formerly dwelt; The Preſ- " bytery doth examine, the people do conſent, every man brings " with him witneſſes of his life, or at leaſt-wiſe teſtimonies: The " name of each one that deſires to be a member, is publiſhed in the " Aſſembly, every one is admoniſhed if he have any exception " againſt the party, to bring it to the Presbytery. If nothing be " brought againſt him, then indeed he is admitted; but yet no " otherwiſe then by a ſolemne covenant with God and the " Church; And to the Church he promiſeth that he will walk as " becometh that holy Fellowſhip, that he will be ſubject to the " diſcipline of that Church, that he will watch over the brethren

" of that Communion, according to the Command of Christ, " *Mat.* 18. 17. that offences may be prevented and healed, &c. " *Polit. Eccles. lib.* 3. *cap.* 16. § 4. *Pag.* 171, 172. Much more he hath to the same purpose in that place, alledging sundry Canons and Decrees of Synods of reformed Churches, wherein they have determined that none should be received into their Churches, but by this way of solemne Covenant. And others that have lived amongst them may have been eye-witnesses that this is their usuall practise.

Obj. 11. " *But what shall be said of the Congregations in* England, *if Churches* " *must be combined by Covenant? Doth not this doctrine blot out all* " *those Congregations out of the Catalogue of Churches? For what ever* " *Covenant may be found in the reformed Churches in other parts, yet it* " *is plaine that the* English *have none.*

Answ. Though we deny not but the Covenant in many of those Congregations is more implicite and not so plaine as were to be desired; (and what is amisse in them, in their materialls, or in want of explicite combining of pure matter, or in any of their wayes, wee will not take upon us to defend) yet we hope we may say of them " with Master *Parker, Polit. Eccles. lib.* 3. *cap.* 16. § 1. *pag.* 167. " *Non abest ea realis & substantialis (quanquam magis quàm par erat* " *implicita) coitio in fœdus, eaque voluntaria professio fidei substantia-* " *lis: quâ (Deo gratia) essentiam Ecclesiæ idque visibilis hacusque* " *sartam tectam in Angliâ conservavit*; That is, there wants not that " reall and substantiall comming together, (or agreeing in Cove- " nant, though more implicate then were meete) and that sub- " stantiall profession of Faith, which (thanks be to God) hath " preserved the essence of visible Churches in *England* unto this " day.

The reasons why wee are loath to say, that the Congregations in *England* are utterly without a Covenant, are these:

First, Because there were many Christian Churches in *England* in the Apostles time, or within a while after, as Master *Fox* sheweth at large, *Act. & Mon. lib.* 2. beginning *pag* 137 where he reporteth out of *Gildas*, that *England* received the Gospel in the time of *Tiberius* the Emperour, under whom Christ suffered, and that *Joseph* of *Arimathea* was sent of *Philip* the Apostle from *France* to *England* about the yeare of Christ. 63. and remained in *England* all his time, and so he with his fellowes layd the first foundation of

of Christian Faith among the Britaine people, and other Preachers and Teachers comming afterward, confirmed the same and increased it. Also the said Master *Fox* reporteth out of *Tertullian*, that the Gospel was dispearsed abroad by the sound of the Apostles into many Nations, and amongst the rest into *Britaine*, yea into the wildest places of *Britaine*, which the *Romans* could never attaine unto: and alledgeth also out of *Nicephorus*, that *Simon Zelotes* did spread the Gospel to the West Ocean, and brought the same into the Iles of *Britaine*: and sundry other proofes he there hath for the same point. Now if the Gospel and Christian Religion were brought into *England* in the Apostles times, and by their means, it is like that the *English* Churches were then constituted by way of Covenant, because that was the manner of constituting Churches in the Apostles time, as also in the times afore Christ, as hath been shewed from the Scripture before in this discourse. And if Christian Congregations in *England* were in those times combined by Covenant, then eternitie of Gods Covenant is such, that it is not the interposition of many corruptions that may arise in after times that can disanull the same, except when men wilfully breake Covenant and reject the offers of the Gospel through obstinacy, which we perswade our selves they are not come unto: and consequently the Covenant remaines which hath preserved the essence of Churches to this day; though the mixture of manifold corruptions, have made the Covenant more implicite then were meete.

Secondly, Because there want no good Records (as may be seene in *Seldens History of Tithes*) to prove that in former times in *England* it was free for men to pay their Tithes and Oblations where themselves pleased: Now this paying of Tithes was accounted as a dutie of people to their Minister, or sheepe to their Pastour: and therefore seeing this was by their owne voluntary agreement and consent, their joyning to the Church as members thereof, & to the Ministery thereof as sheepe of such a mans flock, was also by their owne voluntary agreement and consent: and this doth imply a Covenant. It was not the precincts of Parishes that did limit men in those dayes, but their owne choice.

Thirdly, Those Questions and Answers ministred at Baptisme, spoken of before, (viz. *Do ſt thou renounce? I doe renounce: doeſt thou beleeve? I doe beleeve: doeſt thou promiſe? I doe promiſe*) as they

were uſed in other places, ſo were they alſo in *England*, and are unto this day, though not without the mixture of ſundry corruptions. Now this doth imply a Covenant. And when the children came to age, they were not to be admitted to the Lords Supper, before they had made perſonall Confeſſion of their owne Faith, and ratified the Covenant which was made at their Baptiſme by their Parents, which courſe indeed afterward did grow into a Sacrament of Confirmation, but that was an abuſe of a good Order.

If here it be ſaid, that the Members of the Pariſhionall Aſſemblies are not brought in by their owne voluntary profeſſion, but by the Authority and Proclamation of the Prince, and therefore they have no ſuch Covenant.

The Anſwer is, that the Chriſtian Prince doth but his dutie when he doth not tollerate within his Dominions any open Idolatry, or the open worſhip of falſe Gods by baptized perſons, but ſuppreſſeth the ſame: and likewiſe when he gives free libertie to the exerciſe of all the Ordinances of true Religion, according to the minde of Chriſt, with countenance alſo and encouragement unto all thoſe whoſe hearts are willingly bent thereunto, *Ezra.* 1. 1. 3 & 7. 13. And therefore this practiſe of his cannot overthrow the freeneſſe of mens joyning in Church-Communion, becauſe one dutie cannot oppoſe nor contradict another. And ſuppoſe that this courſe of the Magiſtrate ſhou'd ſeeme to be a forcing of ſome to come in for members who were unfit, (in which caſe it were not juſtifiable) yet this doth not hinder the voluntary ſubjection of others, who with all their hearts deſired it. When the *Iſraelites* departed out of *Ægypt*, there went a mixed multitude with them, many going with them that were not *Iſraelites* indeed, *Exod.* 12. And in the dayes of *Mordecay* and *Heſther*, many of the people of the lands became *Jewes*, when the *Jewes* were in favour and reſpect, *Eſt.* 8. 17. and ſo joyned to them not of their owne voluntary minde, nor of any ſincere heart towards God, but meerely for the favour or feare of men; yet this forced or feined joyning of ſome could not hinder thoſe that were *Iſraelites* indeed from being *Iſraelites*, nor make the *Jewes* to be no *Jewes*, no Church-members.

And the ſame may be ſaid in this caſe, Suppoſe the Magiſtrates Proclamation ſhould be a cauſe, or an occaſion rather, of bringing ſome

ſome into the Church, who came not of their owne voluntary minde, but for feare, or for obteining favour, yet this cannot hinder, but others might voluntarily and freely Covenant to be ſubject to the Goſpel of Chriſt: Such ſubjection and the promiſe of it being the thing which themſelves did heartily deſire, though the Magiſtrate ſhould have ſaid nothing in it.

If any ſhall hereupon inferre, that if the Pariſhionall Aſſemblies be Churches, then the members of them may be admitted to Church priviledges in *New England*, before they joyne to our Churches: Such one may finde his Anſwer in the Anſwer to the tenth of the thirty-two Queſtions; Whereunto we doe referre the Reader for this point. Onely adding this, that this were contrary to the judgement and practiſe of the Reformed Churches, who doe not admit a man for member without perſonall profeſſion of his Faith, and joyning in Covenant, though he had formerly been a member of a Church in another place, as was ſhewed before out of Maſter *Parker*.

Laſtly, If any ſay, that if theſe reaſons prove the *Engliſh* Congregations to have ſuch a Covenant as proves them to be Churches, then why may not *Rome*, and the Aſſemblies of Papiſts goe for true Churches alſo? For ſome man may thinke that the ſame things may be ſaid for them that here in Anſwer to this eleventh Objection are ſaid for the Pariſhes in *England*: Such one muſt remember two things: firſt, that we doe not ſay ſimply, a Covenant makes a company a true Church, but (as was ſaid before) a Covenant to walke in ſuch wayes of worſhip to God and edification of one another, as the Goſpel of Chriſt requireth. For who doubts, but there may be an agreement among theeves, *Pro.* 1. A confederation among Gods enemies, *Pſal.* 83. A conſpiracy among the *Arabians*, the *Ammonites* and *Aſhdodites*, to hinder the building of *Hieruſalem*, Neh. 4. 7, 8. And yet none of theſe are made true Churches by ſuch kind of confederacies or agreements. And ſo wee may ſay of the Aſſemblies of Papiſts, eſpecially ſince the Counſell of *Trent*. If there be any agreement or confederacy among them, it is not to walke in the wayes of the Goſpell, but in wayes contrary to the fundamentall truths of the Goſpel, as Idolatry in worſhip, Hereſie in doctrine, and other Antichriſtian pollutions and corruptions: and therefore if they combined in theſe things, ſuch combinations will never prove them true Churches.

The

The Church is the Pillar and ground of truth, 1 *Tim.* 3. 15. But the Religion of Papiſts is ſo farre from truth, that whoſoever liveth and beleeveth according to it, without repentance, cannot be ſaved. Witneſſe their doctrine in the point of vilifying the Scriptures, and in point of free-will, and of Juſtification by works, of the Popes Supremacy, of the Sacrifice of the Maſſe, of worſhipping of Images, &c. In regard of which, and ſuch like, the Holy Ghoſt ſaith, that their Religion is a Sea, *become as the bloud of a dead man, and every ſoule in that Sea dyeth,* Rev. 16. 3. And therefore agreement in ſuch a Religion will never prove them to be true Churches; nor any Aſſemblies of Arrians, Antitrinitaries, Anabaptiſts, or Famelifts, ſuppoſing them alſo to be combined by Covenant among themſelves.

But now for the Aſſemblies in *England*, the caſe is farre otherwiſe; for the Doctrine of the Articles of Religion which they profeſſe, and which they promiſe to hold and obſerve (though ſome things are amiſſe in ſome of thoſe Articles, and though many perſons live contrary in their lives) yet the doctrine is ſuch that whoſoever beleeveth, and liveth according to it, ſhall undoubtedly be ſaved, and many thouſands have been ſaved therein: and therefore Aſſemblies united by Covenant to obſerve this doctrine may be true Churches, when the Aſſemblies of Papiſts and others may be falſe, although they alſo were combined by Covenant: the reaſon of the difference riſing from the difference that is in the doctrine and Religion which they ſeverally profeſſe, and by Covenant binde themſelves to obſerve, the one being fundamentally corrupt, and conſequently pernicious: The other in the fundamentall points Orthodoxall and ſound.

Secondly, It muſt be remembred alſo (which was intimated before) that if fundamentall corruptions be profeſſed in with impenitency and obſtinacy, then God may diſanull the Covenant on his part, and give a Bill of divorce to ſuch a people, *Jere.* 3. 8. Now experience and the Scripture alſo doth witneſſe of the Jeſuited and *Trent*-Papiſts, that they repented not of the workes of their hands, of worſhipping Devills, and Idolls of Gold, &c. neither repented they of their murthers, nor of their ſorceries, nor of their fornications, nor of their theſts, *Rev.* 9. 20, 21.

But now for the Pariſh Aſſemblies in *England*, we hope that we may ſafely ſay, they doe not ſinne of obſtinacy, but of ignorance, having

having not been convinced (and many of them never having had means to be convinced) of the corruptions that are amongſt them, in reſpect of their conſtitution, and worſhip, and Miniſtery, and ſo the Covenant remaining among them, may prove them to be Churches, when it cannot ſtand the Papiſts in like ſtead, they being impenitent and obſtinate: Which we doe not ſpeake to juſtifie the Pariſhes altogether, as if there were not dangerous corruptions found in them, nay rather (the Lord be mercifull to the ſinnes of his people) wee may lament it with teares, that in reſpect of their members and Miniſtery, in reſpect of their worſhip and walkings, in many of thoſe Aſſemblies there are found ſuch apparent corruptions, as are juſtly grievous to a godly ſoule, that is enlightened to diſcerne them, and greatly diſpleaſing to the Lord, and indeed had need to be repented of betime, leaſt otherwiſe the Lord remove the Candleſticke and unchurch them, *Rev.* 2. 5. In a word, the corruptions remaining are juſt cauſes of repentance and humiliation: but yet in as much as the Articles of Religion, which they profeſſe, containe ſuch wholeſome doctrine, that whoſoever beleeveth and walketh according thereunto, in ſinceritie, ſhall undoubtedly be ſaved, and in as much as the corruptions are not perſiſted in with obſtinacy, therefore wee deny not but they have the truth of Churches remaining.

"*But this opinion of Church-Covenant, is holden by none but the* Obj. 12.
"*Browniſts, or thoſe of the Separation, and therefore it is not to be re-*
"*ceived.*

This ground cannot be made good, that none but they of the Separation are for Church Covenant, for all the Reformed Churches generally, as was ſhewed before in Anſwer to Objection the tenth, are for it in their judgement & practiſe; and ſhall all they be condemned for *Browniſts, or maintaining unlawfull Separation from the Church? Alſo Maſter *Parker* and Doctor *Ames*, men of our owne Nation, famous for holineſſe and learning, and moderation, both of them plead for Church-Covenant, and yet neither of them were Browniſts, but bare witneſſe againſt that riged Separation. For Doctor *Ames*, his judgement of Church-Covenant may "be ſeene in his *Medulla, Theol. lib.* 1. *cap.* 32. § 14, 15, 17. *Fideles* "*non conſtituunt Eccleſiam particularem, quamvis ſimul forſan plures* "*in eodem loco conveniant aut vivant; niſi ſpeciali vinculo interſeſe con-*"*jungantur, &c.* That is, beleevers doe not make a particular

*Anſw.

*By Browniſts and Separatiſts you are to underſtād thoſe of the riged Separation.

F "Church,

" Church, though perhaps there be many of them that meete to-
" gether, and live in the ſame place, unleſſe they be joyned toge-
" ther by ſome ſpeciall bond amongſt themſelves: for ſo one
" Church would many times be diſſolved into many, and many
" Churches confounded into one. Now this bond is a Covenant,
" either expreſſed or implicite, whereby beleevers do binde them-
" ſelves particularly to performe all ſuch duties, both towards God
" and mutually to one another, as pertaine to the nature of a
" Church, and their edification. And thereupon no man is rightly
" admitted into the Church, but by confeſſion of his Faith, and
" ſtipulation, or promiſe of obedience.

Theſe words doe plainely and fully ſhew his judgement of Church-Covenant, to be the very ſame that is held and practiſed in *New-England* at this day. And that he was not for that ſeveritie and regiditie of ſeparation, may be cleared from ſundry of his workes, wherein he plainly and fully beares witneſſe againſt the ſame, and namely, in his *Freſh ſuite againſt Ceremonies, pag.* 207. and in his ſecond *Manuduction*, wherein he purpoſely and at large deales in this Argument of Separation. Sure it is Maſter *Canne* in his Booke, wherein he goes about to prove the neceſſitie of ſeparation from the Non-Conformiſts principles, doth profeſſedly and expreſſely oppoſe himſelfe againſt Doctor *Ames* in the point of Separation, which ſhewes how farre the good Doctor was from favouring that way, when they moſt zealouſly therein doe count him to be a ſpeciall oppoſite of theirs, as indeed he was. And for Maſter *Parker*, his judgement of Church-Covenant was heard before in part; where he ſo much approveth the practiſe of the Reformed Churches in this point. And much more may be ſeene of his judgement herein, in the ſixteenth Chap. of the third booke of his *Polit. Eccleſiaſtica*. And yet in the ſame place, and likewiſe *lib* 1. *cap.* 13. 14. of the ſame Treatiſe he plentifully and plainly ſhewes his diſlike of the wayes of Separation, as is alſo acknowledged in an Admonition to the Reader, prefixed before that Booke, by *I. R. ſuo, ſuorumque nomine*. So that this Aſſertion appeares to be untrue, wherein it is ſaid, that *none but Browniſts and Separatiſts doe approve of Church-Covenant*.

As for the Interence from this ground, that therefore Church-Covenant ſhould not be received, becauſe it is pleaded for and practiſed by the Separatiſts. We Anſwer, that this will not follow, unleſſe

unleſſe it could be proved, that the Separatiſts hold no truth; or if they hold a truth wee muſt not hold it, that ſo it may appeare wee differ from them; Either of which, it were unreaſonable to affirme. If the Papiſts hold ſundry Articles of Faith, as that there is a unitie of the Divine Eſſence, and Trinitie of Perſons, that Jeſus Chriſt is God and man, and that true Meſſiah that was promiſed, and the onely Saviour of the world, and many ſuch like, muſt wee deny theſe things becauſe they are holden by the Papiſts? This were as unreaſonable as to condemne the doctrine of the Reſurrection, becauſe it was maintained by the Phariſees, *Act.* 23. 8. And ſo we ſay of Church-Covenant, holden and practiſed by them of the Separation; as alſo many other truths are maintained by them: No reaſon that truth ſhould be refuſed, becauſe the Separatiſts maintaine it. When Doctor *Bancroft* in a Sermon at *Pauls*-Croſſe, had avouched that the Superioritie of Biſhops above other Miniſters, is by Gods owne Ordinance, and to make the contrary opinion odious, affirmed that *Aerius* perſiſting in it, was condemned for an Heretique by the generall conſent of the whole Church, and that *Martin* and his Companions, doe maintaine the ſame opinion of *Aerius*; What ſaith learned Doctor *Reinolds* hereunto, in a Letter to Sir *Francis Knolls*, who required him "to ſhew his judgement herein: Touching *Martin*, ſaith he, if "any man behave himſelfe otherwiſe then in diſcretion and cha-"ritie he ought, let the blame be laid where the fault is, and de-"fend him not; but if by the way he utter a truth, mingled with "whatſoever elſe, it is not reaſon that that which is of GOD "ſhould be condemned for that which is of man: no more then "the doctrine of the Reſurrection ſhould be reproved, becauſe "it was maintained and held by the Phariſees: Wherefore remo-"ving the odious name of *Martin* from that which is ſinceritie "and love, is to be dealt with, &c.

And the very ſame doe wee ſay to them that would make Church-Covenant to be odious, becauſe it is held by thoſe of the Seperation, who are commonly called Browniſts: If men behave themſelves otherwiſe then they ought, we defend them not therein, but if they hold any truth mingled with whatſoever elſe, wee would not have that which is of God to be condemned, for that which is of man: truth ſhould not be refuſed, becauſe of other corruptions that may be found in them that hold it.

Reply. "*If you with them hold Church-Covenant, you iuſtifie them in all* "*their Wayes of ſeperation and erronious opinions.*

Anſw. Not ſo, for many of them hold that there are no viſible Chriſtians that ſtand members of the Pariſhes in England, and that it is not lawfull to hold any private Religious communion with ſuch perſons; and that the pariſhionall Aſſemblies are none of them true Churches, and that it is not lawfull to hear any of thoſe Miniſters to preach the Word, none of which are juſtified at all by holding Church-Covenant, though they do hold the ſame; There is no ſuch neceſſarie and inſeparable connexion betweene theſe opinions, and that of Church-Covenant, that he that holds this, muſt needs hold the other alſo.

Obje. 13. "*But the time hath been, when your ſelves did not hold Church-Co-* "*venant, as now you do; when you were in England you were not of this* "*mind, and therefore no marvell if your change ſince your coming to New* "*England be ſuſpected, and offenſive. If you change your judgement* "*and practiſe in this manner, God knows whether you may come at laſt,* "*and therefore men may well be afraid of holding with you in this point,* "*which your ſelves did not hold when you lived in your native Countrey.*

Anſw. Some of us when we were in *England*, through the mercie of God, did ſee the neceſſitie of Church-Covenant; and did alſo preach it to the people amongſt whom we miniſtred, though neither ſo ſoone nor ſo fully as were meete, for which we have cauſe to be humbled, and to judge our ſelves before the Lord.

But ſuppoſe we had never knowne nor practiſed the ſame before our coming into this countrey, yet if it be a truth of God, there is no reaſon why we ſhould ſhut our eyes againſt the light, when God holds it forth unto us, nor that others ſhould be offended at us for receiving the ſame. For by the ſame reaſon men might ſtill continue in their ſinnes, and not make any progreſſe in knowledge and holineſſe, that ſo they may not ſeeme unconſtant, which were contrary to the Scripture, wherein we are commanded not to faſhion our ſelves according to the former luſts of our ignorance. 1. *Pet.* 1. 14. But to be changed, *Rom.* 12. 2. and renued, *Epheſ.* 4. 23. and put off the old man, and put on the new, *Epheſ.* 4. yea to grow in grace and holineſſe, 2. *Pet.* 3. 18. and be ſtronger and ſtronger, *Iob* 17. 9. that our good workes may be more at the laſt, then at the firſt, *Revel.* 2. 19. Sure it is, the Apoſtle tells the *Corinthians* and *Epheſians*, that the time had been when

when they were not the ſame men that now they are when he wrote unto them; and yet he doth not blame them for leaving their former opinions or practiſe, but commends them for it, 1. *Cor.* 6. 11. *Epheſ.* 2. 3. &c. And it is ſaid of *Apollos* an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scripture, that when he came to *Epheſus* the way of God was expounded unto him more perfectly by *Aquila* and *Priſcilla*, whereas before he was inſtructed in the way of the Lord, knowing onely the Baptiſme of *John*: yet this was no diſpraiſe at all to him, that now upon better information he would change his judgement to the better, nor unto them that were the means thereof: *Act.* 18. 25, 26. *Nullus pudor eſt ad meliora tranſire.*

The time hath been, (and we may be humbled for it) when we lived without God in the world, and ſome of us in many ſinfull courſes: and ſhall any be offended, becauſe we are not ſtill the ſame? and when God called us from the wayes of ſin and death, to the Fellowſhip of his grace in Chriſt; yet ſome of us lived a long time in conformity to the ceremonies impoſed in our native Countrey, and ſaw not the evill of them. But when God did open our eyes, and let us ſee the unlawfulneſſe thereof, we cannot ſee but it would have been a with-holding the truth in unrighteouſneſſe, and a great unthankfulneſſe to God for light revealed to us, if we ſhould ſtill have continued in that courſe through an inordinate deſire of ſeeming conſtant: and therefore it is not any juſt cauſe of offence that we have changed our judgement and practiſe in thoſe things, when we once perceived the Word of God to diſallow them.

Indeed it hath been ſometime objected againſt Mr. *Cartwright*, and others, that deſired the reformation of the Churches in *England*, in regard of Diſcipline and Church-Order, that they which ſtood ſo much for Reformation in Diſcipline, did in after times adde and alter ſome things, beyond what they ſaw at firſt, and what themſelves had formerly deſired; and that therefore being ſo mutable, and inconſtant in their apprehenſions, they were not to be regarded, nor hearkened unto: to which Objection Mr. *Parker* makes full Anſwer *in Eccleſ. lib.* 2. *ca.* 36. *p.* 307. where he ſheweth from the Scripture, and the teſtimonie of Biſhop *Jewel*, "Doctor *Reinolds*, and others, that in the Reformation of Reli-"gion God brings not his ſervants into perfection in knowledge "and zeale at the firſt, but by degrees, ſo as they grow and make

" progreſſe in theſe things in ſuch wiſe; that their good works are
" more at the laſt then at the firſt, as was ſaid of the Church of
" *Thyatira*, even as the man that had been blind, when Chriſt re-
" ſtored him to his ſight, could at the firſt but ſee men like trees
" walking, and afterward ſaw every man cleerly; and therefore it
" is no good arguing to ſay theſe men have altered and corrected
" ſuch things from what their apprehenſions were at firſt, and
" therefore they are not to be regarded.

Now if this be no good arguing againſt Mr. *Cartwright*, and thoſe that in *England* have been ſtudious of Reformation (as indeed it is not) then it is no good Argument againſt us in this matter of Church-Covenant, to ſay we now hold and practiſe otherwiſe then we have done in former time.

Reply. " *If any ſhall here reply, that change from conformity to the ceremo-*
" *nies to worſhip God more purely is warranted by the Word, and there-*
" *fore not blame-worthy, and that the ſame may be ſaid of the caſe of*
" *Apollos, of the Corinthians, and Epheſians forementioned, and of* Cart-
" wright, *and the reſt in his times.*

Anſw. We anſwer, that this is true, and thereby it appears, that it is not ſimply the changing a mans opinion or practiſe that can be counted blame-worthy, or offenſive, but changing without warrant of the Word; and therefore in point of Church-Covenant, the iſſue muſt not be whether we or others have formerly known and practiſed it, but whether it have ground from Gods Word; For if it have (as we hope have been proved before in this diſcourſe) then the obſerving of it, can be no cauſe of juſt offence unto others, not imputation of inconſtancy to our ſelves, though in time paſt we had not had ſo much light as to diſcerne the neceſſitie and uſe thereof.

The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to ſeek God, though he be not cleanſed according to the purification of the Sanctuary: and grant unto all his Churches and ſervants, that their love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgement, that they may diſcerne the things that differ; and approve the things that are excellent, and by his Spirit of truth be led forward into all truth, till Antichriſt be utterly conſumed with the breath of his mouth, and the brightneſſe of his coming, and the holy City new Jeruſalem come down from God out of heaven, as a Bride adorned for her husband the Lambe, the Lord Jeſus, to whom be all glory of affiance and ſervice for ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.